

COOKING ITALIAN: 3 hearty sauces • how to make gnocchi • fennel

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JANUARY 2008 NO. 90

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for today  
& tomorrow

easy pasta  
side dishes

Friday night  
chicken menu

secrets to  
great gumbo

make your  
favorite bread  
pudding

choosing a  
12-inch skillet

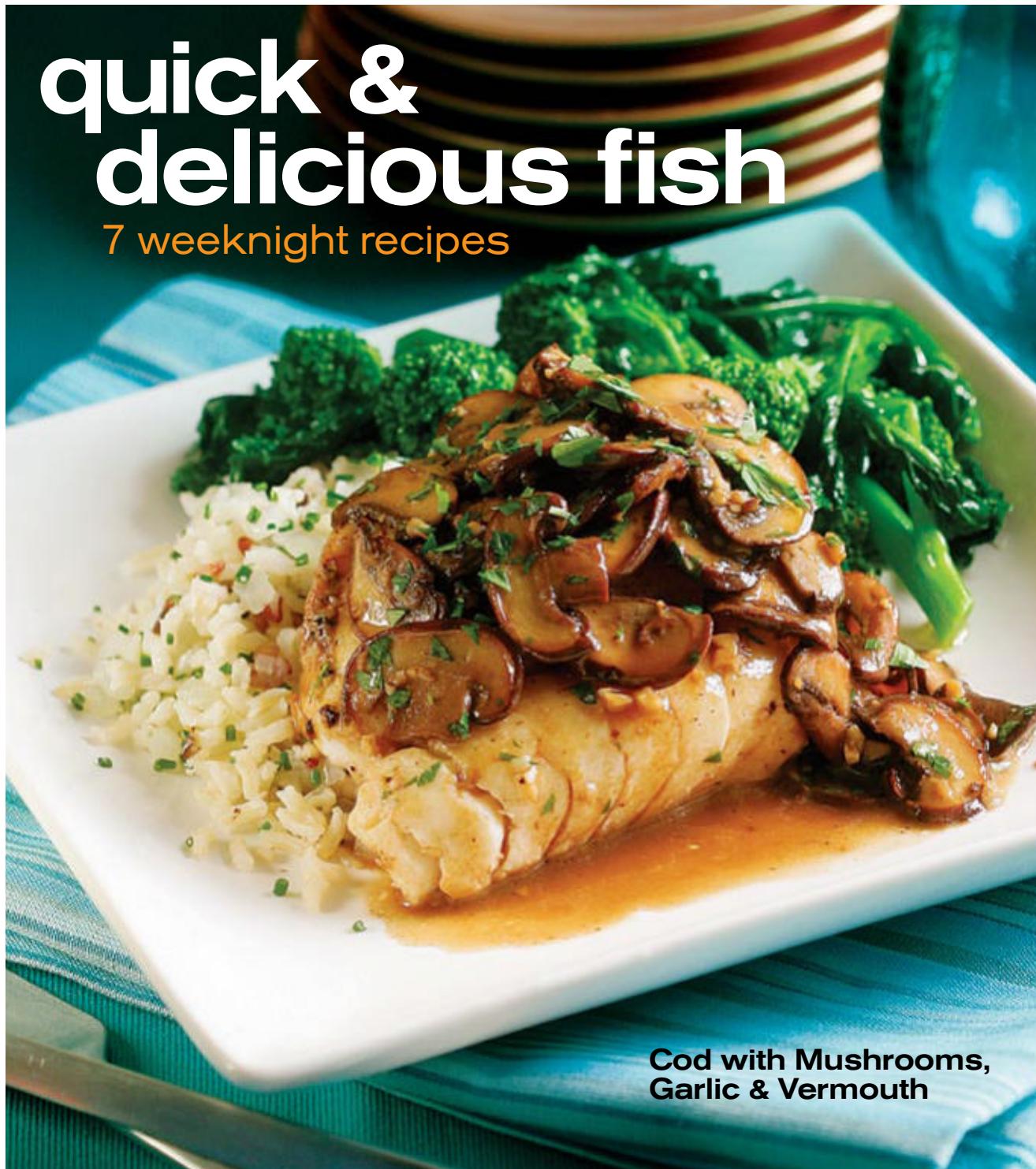
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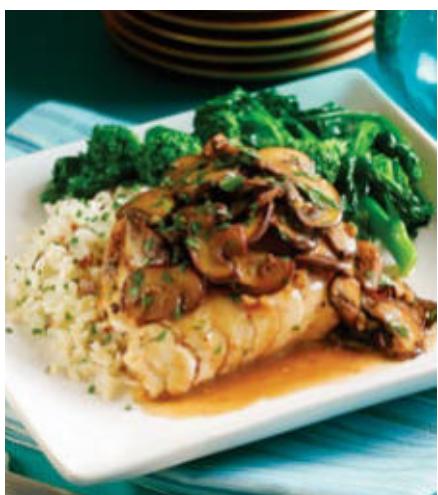
# Fine Cooking

JANUARY 2008 ISSUE 90



## ON THE COVER

86a Quick & Delicious  
Quick fish



Cod with Mushrooms, Garlic & Vermouth



28



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## FEATURES

### **36 Roast Pork for Today and Tomorrow**

**Start with a single roasted pork loin and transform the leftovers into three more meals during the week**  
by Tony Rosenfeld

### **42 WEEKNIGHT IDEA**

#### Pasta on the Side

**Move over, rice and potatoes—little pastas like orzo, Israeli couscous, and fregola make a delicious change of pace**  
by Tasha DeSerio

### **46 Fennel—The Raw and the Cooked**

**Try four delicious ways to get the most out of fennel's sweet anise flavor**  
by Rosetta Costantino with Janet Fletcher

### **51 Get Your Gumbo On**

**A New Orleans native shows how to make two authentic versions of this classic Louisiana soup**  
by Poppy Tooker

### **56 DINNER WITH FRIENDS**

#### A Passage to India

**Spice up a casual, comforting menu of roasted chicken, spinach, and rice with the enticing flavors of India**  
by Melissa Clark

### **61 HOW TO MAKE**

#### The Secrets to Soft, Fluffy Gnocchi

**For gnocchi with a delicate, melt-in-your-mouth texture, choose the right kind of potatoes and add just enough flour**  
by Laura Giannatempo

### **66 COOKING WITHOUT RECIPES**

#### Treat Yourself to Bread Pudding

**This one is so delicious, it's worth the indulgence—and it's easy to customize with your favorite flavors**  
by Joanne Chang



## IN THE BACK

### **70 From Our Test Kitchen**

- ❖ Fennel fronds
- ❖ Fried capers
- ❖ Strained yogurt
- ❖ Buying & storing fish
- ❖ Louisiana-style hot sauce
- ❖ Cardamom

### **76 Food Science**

#### Ozone sanitizers

### **78 Tasting Panel**

#### Capers

### **80 Where To Buy It**

### **86 Nutrition Information**



74



72

## recipes

- ◆ QUICK  
Under 45 minutes
- ◆ MAKE AHEAD  
Can be completely prepared ahead but may need reheating and a garnish to serve
- ◆ MOSTLY MAKE AHEAD  
Can be partially prepared ahead but will need a few finishing touches before serving
- ◆ VEGETARIAN  
May contain eggs and dairy ingredients



### Cover Recipe

- ◆ Cod with Mushrooms, Garlic & Vermouth, 86a

### Appetizers

- ◆ Pan-Fried Crisp Fennel, 48
- ◆ Toasted Spiced Cashews, 58

### Soups & Stews

- ◆ Chicken-Andouille Filé Gumbo, 55
- ◆ New Mexican Pork & Green Chile Stew, 41
- ◆ Poppy Tooker's Seafood Gumbo, 54

### Salads

- ◆ Fennel & Orange Salad with Red Onion & Olives, 48

### Sandwiches & Wraps

- ◆ Chinese Pork & Mushroom Wraps, 40
- ◆ Grilled Roast Pork Cubano Sandwiches, 39

### Chicken

- ◆ Chicken-Andouille Filé Gumbo, 55
- ◆ Indian-Spiced Chicken with Lime & Cilantro, 59

### Pork & Sausage

- ◆ Chicken-Andouille Filé Gumbo, 55
- ◆ Chinese Pork & Mushroom Wraps, 40
- ◆ Grilled Roast Pork Cubano Sandwiches, 39
- ◆ New Mexican Pork & Green Chile Stew, 41

- ◆ Roasted Pork Loin with Maple-Mustard Crust, 38

### Seafood

- ◆ Broiled Miso-Marinated Halibut, 86a
- ◆ Cod with Mushrooms, Garlic & Vermouth, 86a
- ◆ Cumin-Rubbed Tuna with Roasted-Jalapeño Tartar Sauce, 86a
- ◆ Herb & Parmigiano-Crusted Tilapia with Quick Tomato Sauce, 86a
- ◆ Mussels Steamed with Leeks, Tomatoes & Garlic, 86a

- ◆ Poppy Tooker's Seafood Gumbo, 54

- ◆ Salmon Seared on Bacon with Balsamic Vinegar, Honey & Rosemary, 86a

- ◆ Seared Scallops with Golden Shallot & Grapefruit Sauce, 86a
- ◆ Shrimp Roasted with Potatoes & Prosciutto, back cover

### Side Dishes

- ◆ Basmati Rice Pilaf with Pistachios, 59
- ◆ Braised Fennel with Tomato, Green Olives & Capers, 50
- ◆ Fennel Layered with Potatoes & Breadcrumbs, 49
- ◆ Fennel & Orange Salad with Red Onion & Olives, 48
- ◆ Fregola with Wild Mushrooms, Sherry & Cream, 42
- ◆ Israeli Couscous with Saffron, Toasted Pine Nuts & Currants, 45

- ◆ Orzo with Lemon, Garlic, Parmigiano & Herbs, 44

- ◆ Pan-Fried Crisp Fennel, 48
- ◆ Roasted Beets with White Balsamic & Citrus Dressing, 25

- ◆ Spinach with Yogurt & Chickpeas, 60

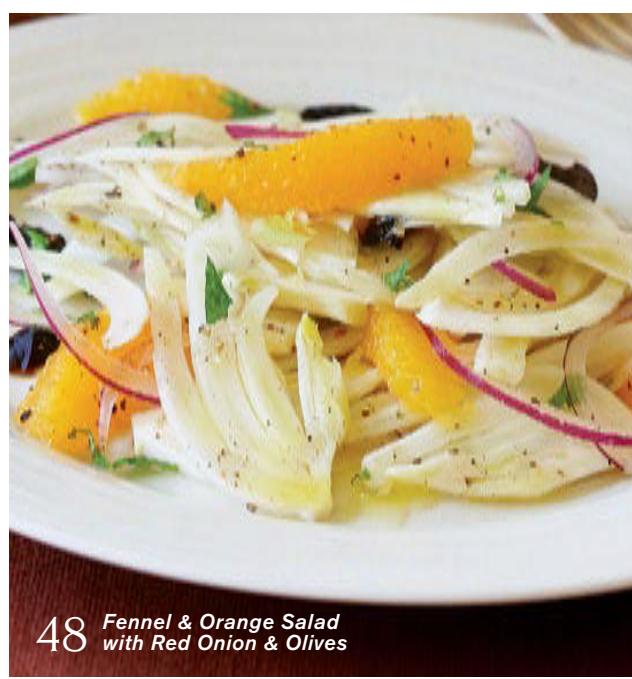
### Pasta, Gnocchi & Rice

- ◆ Basmati Rice Pilaf with Pistachios, 59
- ◆ Fregola with Wild Mushrooms, Sherry & Cream, 42
- ◆ Gnocchi with Creamy Gorgonzola Sauce, 64
- ◆ Gnocchi with Sausage & Leek Ragù, 65
- ◆ Israeli Couscous with Saffron, Toasted Pine Nuts & Currants, 45
- ◆ Orzo with Lemon, Garlic, Parmigiano & Herbs, 44
- ◆ Pan-Seared Gnocchi with Browned Butter & Sage, 64
- ◆ Potato Gnocchi, 62

### Desserts

- ◆ Apricot-Almond Bread Pudding, 67
- ◆ Lemon-Coconut Bread Pudding, 67
- ◆ Mango Lassi Parfait, 60
- ◆ Rum-Raisin Bread Pudding, 67
- ◆ Triple-Berry Bread Pudding, 67
- ◆ Masala Chai, 74

### Beverages



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# Renew and revive

January has a reputation as a time to slow down, recuperate from the bustle of the holidays, and maybe repent after too much indulging. But the reality is, life isn't put on hold just because a new year shows up on the calendar. Everyone still needs to eat, and how better to beat the winter blahs than inviting others over for dinner? In this issue of *Fine Cooking*, we offer some quick and flavorful dinner pairings as well as suggestions for casual entertaining that include slightly off-beat seasonings and inspirations—because cooking and eating should never be boring, no matter what the month.

Remember to check the yield on each recipe, as you may need to double or halve it to suit your needs.

## Fast fish dinners

Look to fish when you need to get dinner on the table quickly. These pairings come together easily on a weeknight yet are vibrant enough to be company-worthy.

**Seared Scallops with Golden Shallot & Grapefruit Sauce,** p. 86a

**Basmati Rice Pilaf with Pistachios,** p. 59

**To drink:** A dry, fruity white with a touch of spice like the 2005 d'Arenberg Viognier/Marsanne "The Hermit Crab," McLaren Vale, Australia, \$16

**Salmon Seared on Bacon with Balsamic Vinegar, Honey & Rosemary,** p. 86a

**Fregola with Wild Mushrooms, Sherry & Cream,** p. 42

**To drink:** A supple red with moderate tannins like the 2006 A to Z Pinot Noir, Oregon, \$18

**Cod with Mushrooms, Garlic & Vermouth,** p. 86a

**Orzo with Lemon, Garlic, Parmigiano & Herbs,** p. 44

**To drink:** A dry, high-acid white with forward fruit like the 2006 Covey Run Dry Riesling, Columbia Valley, \$8

## Sweet & savory Saturday night

Spice up your weekend without spending all day in the kitchen. You can toast the cashews earlier in the day and make the cardamom syrup for the mango parfait up to four hours ahead of time. The shrimp comes together in about half an hour, and the salad can be assembled just before serving.

**Toasted Spiced Cashews,** p. 58

**Fennel & Orange Salad with Red Onion & Olives,** p. 48

**Shrimp Roasted with Potatoes & Prosciutto,** back cover

**Mango Lassi Parfait,** p. 60

**To drink:** A slightly sweet white like the 2006 Domaine François Pinon Vouvray, France, \$16

## Casual dinner party

There's plenty of do-ahead here: Bake the bread pudding earlier in the day, make the couscous and prep the fennel a couple of hours in advance. When guests arrive, you'll just need to pan-fry the fennel to serve as a starter and then sear the fish.

**Pan-Fried Crisp Fennel,** p. 48

**Cumin-Rubbed Tuna with Roasted-Jalapeño Tartar Sauce,** p. 86a

**Israeli Couscous with Saffron, Toasted Pine Nuts & Currants,** p. 45

**Double-Ginger Bread Pudding,** p. 67

**To drink:** A tart, fruity rosé like the 2006 Etude Rosé of Pinot Noir, Carneros, \$18

## Warming winter supper

When the weather is frightful, serve this comforting, stick-to-your ribs meal. There's a double dose of fennel, some roasted with the pork loin and some layered with the potatoes in a hearty gratin. Finish up with a bread pudding that can be made earlier in the day.

**Roasted Pork Loin with Maple-Mustard Crust,** p. 38

**Fennel Layered with Potatoes and Breadcrumbs,** p. 49

**Rum-Raisin Bread Pudding,** p. 67

**To drink:** A rich, savory Grenache blend from the southern Rhône Valley of France, like the 2003 Guigal Gigondas, \$24

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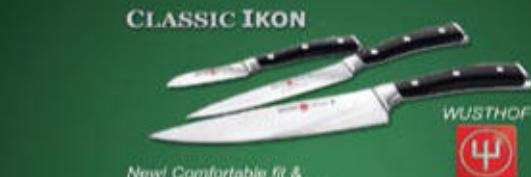
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# Keeping Your Balance

t can be awkward, but it happens all the time. I'm standing in line at the Taunton cafeteria, and someone I'm barely acquainted with says to me, "How is it that everyone on the *Fine Cooking* staff manages to stay so trim?" Of course it's flattering to hear this kind of comment, but I know, too, that people aren't just being nice; they're genuinely curious—and maybe a little suspicious. There must be a little voodoo going on, they think. How can

people work for a cooking magazine—and attend tastings every day—without gaining a lot of weight?

It's not voodoo. But it is tasty. The secret is this: We eat relatively small portions of really good-quality food, which naturally tends to be more satisfying than the average stuff. In a way, we've been trained to eat this way by our tastings. When we go down to the test kitchen every Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday afternoon, we sometimes

(almost every day), we break open a good bittersweet chocolate and eat a small square; a little of it is much more satisfying than an entire bag of M&M's.

You may wonder why I'm bringing all this up now. Well, for one thing, I like to publish a staff photo once a year to let you all know who we are. In doing so this year, I was reminded of the question that started this letter. But also, since it's the January issue, I thought you might be wondering how to find that balance in the new year—how to cook the foods you love, eat all the virtuous stuff, and sneak in some treats, too. Other than keeping moving (which I think is probably the FC staff's real secret—the test kitchen, is, after all, a brisk 10-minute walk from our office), eating a little bit of a variety of good food can be really satisfying. So variety is what we've got for January, from healthful quick fish dishes to heartier fare like gumbo to a classic splurge like bread pudding.

I know that diet is a highly personal matter. That's exactly why we offer nutrition information in *Fine Cooking* but let you decide what (and how much) you're going to eat. I also realize that the concepts of moderation and portion control aren't exactly new or sexy. But they make a lot of sense for people like you and me who love to cook and eat. So I hope you feel good about this issue and about the new year. And remember to be nice to yourself every once in a while. You deserve it.

—Susie Middleton, editor



The Fine Cooking staff, 2007: back row, from left: Pam, Jennifer, Sarah; second row: Sharon, Annie, Susie, Denise; third row: Karen, Enid, Maria, Rebecca, Lisa; front row: Dabney, Laura, Allison. Not pictured: Joanne, Kim, and Judy.

## Eating a little bit of a big variety of foods can be really satisfying.

taste as many as 12 dishes. If we ate any more than a few bites of everything, we'd feel sick for the rest of the day. (Last week we had a huge tasting that included rack of lamb, creamy tomato soup, meringues, sesame noodles, grilled onions, crostini, and chocolate cake. All at 2 o'clock in the afternoon. I am not kidding.)

We tend to carry this way of eating—a kind of grazing or sampling—throughout the day and even to eating out in restaurants. Because we like to try as many different dishes as we can, we'll often order a lot of small plates or starters to share, rather than one big entrée. And we stay focused on eating the good stuff. For example, when we get a chocolate craving in the office



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# from our readers

## Is olive oil the right choice for high-heat roasting?

I enjoy reading your magazine and was particularly interested in your "Essential Guide to Roasting Vegetables" in the October/November issue (*Fine Cooking* #88). I do, however, have concerns with your very hot roasting temperature of 475°F and your use of olive oil to coat the vegetables.

Most olive oil has a smoke point in the low- to mid-300°F range, and no pure olive oil will withstand 475°F. At the smoke point, oil is beginning to burn. This could add a burned taste to foods and will introduce carcinogens to the food and to the air in your kitchen.

I would suggest using grapeseed oil for the roasting process and then drizzling with extra-virgin olive oil prior to serving.

In addition, I just checked the packaging of some good-quality parchment paper, and it says that it is good only to 420°F. Do you have a brand name of a high-temperature parchment?

—*Daniel Fuchs,  
Almonte, Ontario*

**Test kitchen manager Jennifer Armentrout replies:** Thank you for writing with your concerns, but there's really nothing to be worried about. While it's true that the smoke point of olive oil is below 475°F, you're heating the oven to this temperature, not the oil. Air is not a great conductor of heat. This is why you can reach into a hot oven without getting burned (provided you don't touch the metal parts, of course), but if you were to stick your hand in a vat of hot oil, even at a much lower temperature than 475°F, you'd be burned right away. The poor conductivity of air combined with water escaping from the vegetables in the form of steam keeps the oil from going up in smoke.

We tested this vegetable-roasting method more times than I care to count, and we never had a problem with smoke (nor did the vegetables taste burned, just deliciously browned).

As for the parchment, it does brown and become a little crisp at this high temperature, but it doesn't char or catch fire. We purchase our parchment from the King Arthur Flour Baker's Catalogue (BakersCatalogue.com or KingArthurFlour.com). It's pre-cut to fit half sheet pans and comes in a cardboard tube without instructions or warnings of any kind.

I suspect that the parchment you're referring to is made by Reynolds. I contacted the Reynolds Kitchens, and their response was that they recommend 420°F "to keep the parchment safe" from browning. The only problem with parchment browning is that you can't use it again.

I hope I've convinced you to try my roasted vegetable method, but if you're still doubtful, by all means give the grapeseed oil a shot. You can skip the parchment, too, though you may find that the vegetables stick to the baking sheet a little without it.

## You're never too old

I have been involved in cooking for about four years now. The first two, I was more like the pot boy or the orderly; then I moved to a retirement home, and after a few meals in the dining room, I became seriously interested in cooking.

My wife was a gourmet cook, and luckily, I kept many of her books and notes. These, coupled with the articles and recipes from your magazine, make it possible for me to cook and assemble some good meals. All of this is quite unbelievable, as I never thought I would live to be 94 nor spend any time reading a cookbook or cooking magazine. But here I am, making your Best Beef Stew, following the Cooking Without Recipes article in your February/March 2004 issue (*Fine Cooking* #63). Thanks.

—*Claude J. Haines,  
Atlanta, Georgia* ♦

# Fine Cooking

EDITOR  
**Susie Middleton**

ART DIRECTOR  
**Annie Giamattei**

SPECIAL ISSUES EDITOR  
**Joanne McAllister Smart**

SENIOR FOOD EDITOR/TEST KITCHEN MANAGER  
**Jennifer Armentrout**

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ASSOCIATE EDITORS  
**Laura Giannatempo, Lisa Waddle**

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SENIOR COPY/PRODUCTION EDITOR  
**Enid Johnson**

ASSOCIATE ART DIRECTOR **Pamela Winn**

TEST KITCHEN ASSOCIATE/FOOD STYLIST  
**Allison Ehri Kreitler**

RECIPE TESTER **Dabney Gough**

EDITORIAL ASSISTANT **Kim Landi**

EDITORS AT LARGE

**Maryellen Driscoll, Kimberly Y. Masibay**

TEST KITCHEN INTERN **Will Moyer**

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

**Pam Anderson, Abigail Johnson Dodge,  
Tim Gaiser, Sarah Jay, Tony Rosenfeld,  
Molly Stevens**

PUBLISHER **Maria Taylor**

ASSISTANT PUBLISHER **Karen Lutjen**

VICE PRESIDENT, CIRCULATION

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**Jay Annis**

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## HOW TO CONTACT US:

### Fine Cooking

The Taunton Press, 63 S. Main St., P.O. Box 5506,  
Newtown, CT 06470-5506 203-426-8171  
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### Editorial:

To submit an article proposal, write to *Fine Cooking* at the address above or:

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# contributors



Joanne Chang



Melissa Clark



Poppy Tooker

While writing his first book, *150 Things to Make with Roast Chicken (and 50 Ways to Roast It)*, contributing editor **Tony Rosenfeld** ("Pork Loin," p. 36) became quite skilled at transforming leftovers into jazzy weeknight dinners. So for this issue, we asked him to put those skills back into action—this time with a delicious recipe for roasted pork loin plus three flavorful ideas for the leftovers. Tony is a food writer and part-owner of b.good, a healthful fast-food restaurant in Boston.

**Tasha DeSerio** ("Pasta on the Side," p. 42), a frequent *Fine Cooking* contributor, cooked for Chez Panisse Restaurant & Café for five years. She is now a cooking teacher, food writer, and the co-owner of Olive-Green Catering in Berkeley, California.

**Rosetta Costantino** ("Fennel," p. 46) was born in Calabria, Italy. Her father made olive oil, cheese, and wine on the family farm, and cooking was always important in her life. So after moving to the Bay Area with her family and pursuing a career in engineering, Rosetta decided to go back to her roots in the kitchen. She's now a cooking teacher and an expert in southern Italian cuisine. **Janet Fletcher** is a well-known Bay Area food writer and cookbook author. She was trained at the Culinary Institute of America and at Chez Panisse. Rosetta and Janet are writing a Calabrian cookbook, to be published in spring 2009.

Chef, food historian, and culinary activist **Poppy Tooker** ("Gumbo," p. 51) teaches at The Savvy Gourmet cooking school in New Orleans. Founder and head of the New Orleans Slow Food Convivium, a group intent

on preserving regional cooking and products, Poppy has been instrumental in reviving endangered local foods, such as rice calas and Creole cream cheese. She trained under Madeleine Kamman, receiving both a chef's diploma and cooking teacher's diploma.

After brief stints as a restaurant cook and professional caterer, **Melissa Clark** ("Indian Menu," p. 56) pursued a more literary path. She earned an M.F.A. in writing from Columbia University and began her freelance food writing career in 1993. Since then, she has written numerous articles and 18 cookbooks, including her latest, *Chef Interrupted: Delicious Chefs' Recipes That You Can Actually Make at Home*.

Born and raised in Torino, Italy, **Laura Giannatempo** ("Gnocchi," p. 61) is an associate editor for *Fine Cooking* and our resident expert in all things Italian. A graduate of the Institute of Culinary Education, she worked as a catering cook and line cook in New York City and was an assistant editor at *The Magazine of La Cucina Italiana*. She's also the author of *A Ligurian Kitchen: Recipes and Tales from the Italian Riviera*, a cookbook and memoir about her summer vacations with her family on the Mediterranean.

Good thing she has ready access to lots of crusty bread, because **Joanne Chang** ("Bread Pudding," p. 66) needs the fuel to get through her hectic days and nights. She opened Flour Bakery + Café in Boston seven years ago, and a second location last year. If that weren't enough, she and her fiancé, restaurateur Christopher Myers, opened the funky Asian eatery Myers + Chang in Boston's South End last September. ♦



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Tim Gaiser is one of only 79 master sommeliers in North America. He was senior wine merchant at Virtual Vineyards for five years and has worked at Heitz Cellars in Napa Valley and at the Cypress Club in San Francisco. He teaches classes at the Culinary Institute of America.

**I just bought my first house, and it has a stone basement. I was thinking about starting a home wine cellar down there, but it has that old-basement smell. Will this affect the wine?**

—Arvin Byrnes, Griswold, Connecticut



You shouldn't have a problem. Any type of wine closure—be it cork, plastic cork, or screw cap—forms an impermeable seal which will keep out extraneous odors as well as air. The main factors to consider when creating a wine cellar are that you want a location with a constant temperature between 55° and 60°F, without any source of light or vibration. Avoid a place with great fluctuations in temperature, which could cause expansion and contraction of the wine.

In future issues we'll tackle chocolate, convection cooking, and eating local. Send your questions on these topics to Ask the Expert, Fine Cooking, PO Box 5506, Newtown, CT 06470-5506, or by email to fcqa@taunton.com.

**Does freezing leftover wine affect the taste? Should it be used only for cooking, or is it still possible to drink after thawing?**

—Carolyn Eriksen, St. Louis, Missouri

Freezing wine should generally be avoided, as it will alter the taste of the wine significantly. You could still use it for cooking, but most chefs would tell you to cook only with wine you'd want to drink.

# Storing Wine

## How to keep your bottles in peak drinking condition

**What's the best way to remove the label from a bottle of wine (to save in a scrapbook)?**

—Betsy Jennings, via email

Some wine labels can be removed by soaking the bottle in warm water for about 15 minutes. But many labels are now put on with super adhesives and are practically impossible to remove without a label-removing kit, which includes a clear adhesive sticker that you apply to the label and peel off. You can purchase these kits through good wine shops and specialty online stores such as the Wine Appreciation Guild ([WineAppreciation.com](http://WineAppreciation.com)).

**I've heard that storing sparkling wine or Champagne in the refrigerator for more than a short time will ruin it because the vibration of the refrigerator motor will somehow make the wine go flat. Is this true?**

—Richard Ayres, Washington, DC

Vibration is the enemy when it agitates the wine or produces too much heat, but most commercial refrigerators don't generate enough to worry about. More of an issue in storing wine in the refrigerator is how dry the air gets. This can dry out a cork, which would release all the bubbles in a sparkling wine. That's why it's best to keep a bottle of sparkling wine in a refrigerator for no more than six weeks. ♦

### Storing tips

- ❖ About 95% of wine is meant to be consumed within the first year after release.
- ❖ The proper humidity for storing wine is between 60% and 70%.
- ❖ Store wine away from natural or ultraviolet light, which can interact with the sulfites in a bottle of wine to form mercaptans, or foul-smelling aromas that make the wine undrinkable.
- ❖ If you break or lose a cork, you can store leftover wine by securing a piece of plastic wrap over the bottle opening with a tightly wound rubber band.



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## on the front burner

### Comfort Food Menus



Cassoulet

#### **Cassoulet**

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### Equipment Buyer's Guides

In the market for a new kitchen gadget? Be sure to check out our new Web-only guides first, for all you need to know before buying. Coming in January:



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#### **This month:**

Create Your Own Bread Pudding



**Coming January 15:**  
Create Your Own Frittata

### Web-Only Feature

#### **Delicious Dishes from Shortcut Ingredients**

by Joanne Smart

Though "from scratch" rules the day, we all have a few high-quality prepared products that serve us well when time is short in the kitchen. Find out what our editors and readers chose as their favorites and get four quick recipes that make the most of them.

### Ask the Expert

Post a question in our special online forum and get a personalized response from the pros within 48 hours.

**Tim Gaiser**, master sommelier and *Fine Cooking*'s resident wine expert discusses the hows and whys of storing wine: which wines age well, how long to store, and more.



**January 1–15**

**Laura Giannatempo**, associate editor at *Fine Cooking* and author of *A Ligurian Kitchen: Recipes and Tales from the Italian Riviera*, takes questions on homemade pasta.



**January 16–31**



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*To make his fresh sausages, Richard Schwartzberg first grinds the meat with a standard electric meat grinder.*



*Next, he adds different seasonings, depending on the kind of sausage he's making, and thoroughly mixes the meat and seasonings by hand.*

*"Mixing well is very important; you have to knead the meat almost like dough," he says, "so the flavorings get distributed evenly."*

*He feeds the mixture into a sausage stuffer and fills long links of sausage. He likes to use a hand-cranked machine because it's slower than mechanized versions, allowing him to have more control over the results.*

*Richard then twists the sausage into smaller links, lets them dry, and arranges them in the display case, ready for customers to buy.*



# Handmade sausages from an old-fashioned grocery store

BY LAURA GIANNATEMPO

**I**magine an old-fashioned neighborhood grocery store where the staff is friendly and knowledgeable, the owner sometimes comes out to greet his customers, and the butcher knows meat inside out and can give you precious advice on cuts to buy and how to cook them. No, that grocery store didn't close in 1975—it's still thriving in Santa Monica, California. It's called Bob's Market, and that butcher is Richard Schwartzberg.

Richard began cutting meat when he was 14. During summer breaks from school he worked with a local butcher who took him under his wing and taught him the secrets of the craft. At 18, he was the youngest journeyman butcher in the union, and he's been cutting meat ever since. Under his expert supervision, Bob's Market has one of the best meat departments in the Los Angeles area and offers more than 12 varieties of fresh, handmade sausages.

With the help of Fabian Roman, Richard makes at least 10 fresh batches every morning. Varieties range from sweet Italian, andouille, and chorizo to his own creations, like pork and pecorino sausage with fresh herbs. He also custom-makes sausages for customers, provided they come in with a recipe and are ready to buy at least 5 pounds.

Richard makes all his sausages by hand, using only a meat grinder and a hand-cranked sausage stuffer. He uses high-quality meat and natural hog casings as well as fresh herbs, spices, and aromatics, including freshly chopped onions and garlic. And you can taste it. These sausages are juicy and rich, with clean, vibrant herb and spice flavors. *Bob's Market's sausages can be purchased in person at the store; they are not available by mail-order. For more information, call 310-452-1114.* ♦



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## Cheese, please

Three of our favorite cheese sources offer opportunities to sample the best artisan cheeses through a monthly club. [MurraysCheese.com](http://MurraysCheese.com) (888-692-4339, ext. 7) will send a monthly selection of three cheeses, starting at \$200 for four months. At [FormaggioKitchen.com](http://FormaggioKitchen.com) (888-212-3224), you can sign up for three or four cheeses per month (a three-month subscription is \$185 and \$265, respectively). And at [ArtisanalCheese.com](http://ArtisanalCheese.com) (877-797-1200), if you join for 12 months (\$660), you get a thirteenth month free.

# Flavor of the month

Your favorite ingredients, delivered to your doorstep

BY REBECCA FREEDMAN

**T**hese days, it seems that much of our mail comes in electronically. So when a real, good old-fashioned package arrives in the mail, we always get a little thrill of excitement. It's even better if the package is full of something delicious—wine or cheese or even chocolate or olive oil.

If you, too, are looking for that indulgent mail-order fix, consider joining a food-of-the-month club (memberships make terrific gifts, too). Depending on the club, your options will vary: You can join for one month or many, or upgrade your membership for different or extra products. You might also get great little bonuses with each package, like tasting notes and recipes. And some clubs even offer discounts on additional orders for members. But before you sign up, take note: Some clubs' prices include shipping and tax, and some don't, so be aware as you investigate your options.

## A club for everyone

If wine and cheese aren't your thing, there are lots of other food-of-the-month clubs out there. When we searched online, so many interesting clubs came up that we wanted to list a few here. Though we haven't tried buying from all of these, many are run by stores that we often look to for high-quality ingredients. Some sources also have more than one club, so be sure to check the Web sites.

### Exotic fruits of the month

[Melissas.com](http://Melissas.com)  
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[Chocosphere.com](http://Chocosphere.com)  
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[GratefulPalate.com](http://GratefulPalate.com)  
(888-472-5283)

### Olive oil of the month

[Zingermans.com](http://Zingermans.com)  
(888-636-8162)

### Avocado of the month

[AvocadooftheMonthClub.com](http://AvocadooftheMonthClub.com) (866-714-9921)

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# Sweet beets

## One of winter's treasures

BY RUTH LIVELY

**B**eets are the jewels of the underground garden. Full of sweetness and saturated color, these beautiful roots become tender and full-flavored when cooked—an ideal ingredient for salads, side dishes, and soups. And although we think of beets mainly as root vegetables, in truth, the whole plant is edible. The greens are delicious: You can use the small, tender inner leaves raw in salads and steam, sauté, or braise the larger leaves as you would Swiss chard or kale.

Beets are available almost year-round, but the best time for freshly harvested beets is summer straight through fall and early winter. While the roots are great keepers, the green tops don't last very long, which is why you sometimes see beets sold without them. If your beet greens look good when you buy

them, use them as soon as possible. Store both roots and leaves in a loosely closed plastic bag in the crisper drawer of the refrigerator.

Beets' sweet earthiness is a perfect match for the vibrant tanginess of oranges, as in the dressing recipe at far right. Many herbs also pair well with beets, including dill, chives, chervil, mint, and tarragon. And when looking for other vegetable partners, think cool-season greens like spinach, endive, escarole, and arugula, but also onions, shallots, and scallions. I like to pair beets with tangy cheeses that act as a foil to their sweetness: Goat cheese, feta, and blue cheese are among my favorites. And I love the way beets' mellow sweetness blends with the robust, zesty flavors of ginger, mustard, capers, and horseradish.

### Beets' true colors

While most of us are familiar with red-purple beets, there are also golden and striped beets. If you look hard enough, you may even find white ones.

**RED BEETS** are the most commonly available. They have deep-maroon flesh with ring patterns that suggest wood grain. Their flavor is rich and sweet, with a slight earthiness and mineral quality. The Forona and Cylindra varieties have elongated, cylindrical roots that produce even slices when cut crosswise.

**GOLDEN BEETS** have orange skin, deep-golden flesh, and a full, sweet flavor that is milder and less earthy than that of red beets. The stems and leaves carry a golden color, too.

**CHIOGGIA BEETS**, also known as Candy Cane, are an Italian heirloom variety whose flesh has alternating concentric circles of red and white. When you cut one crosswise, it looks like a bull's eye. The colors, alas, tend to blend together during cooking.



## How to cook a beet

Because beets are so dense, they take a relatively long time to cook. They can be boiled, steamed (best for small beets), pressure-cooked (ideal for getting them done in a hurry), and roasted. In my opinion, roasting brings out the best in beets, caramelizing the sugars and deepening their flavor.

To retain their juices, I like to leave beets whole and unpeeled when I'm

boiling or steaming them, but for roasting, I peel and cut them first. This lets every piece of beet get nice and browned, and it keeps all the messy work up front. Plus, they roast much faster without skins, and you don't have to wait for the beets to cool before you peel them. No matter what method you use, cooked beets keep at least a week in the fridge.

## Bright beet salads

There's no end to the beet salads you can make. Here are a few ideas, good with beets cooked any way.

### Toss cooked beets in a mustardy vinaigrette

Made with olive oil, red wine vinegar, a dollop of Dijon mustard, salt, and pepper. Serve on a bed of young beet greens or mesclun greens.

### Mix cooked cubed beets and young greens

With a simple vinaigrette thickened with puréed roasted garlic, and serve with goat-cheese toasts on the side.

### Cut up cooked beets and toss in a vinaigrette

Made with walnut or hazelnut oil and sherry vinegar. Arrange over endive or frisée, scatter with toasted nuts (the same kind as the oil you use), and serve with a big slice of creamy Gorgonzola.

### Marinate warm beets in a little white wine

Or rice vinegar. When cool, toss with lots of chopped dill and arrange over spinach leaves. Drizzle with olive oil and garnish with ultrathin slices of red onion.

## Or try them in soups & sauces

**Make a hot-pink vinaigrette** that's as vibrant on the tongue as it is to the eye by puréeing a steamed or roasted beet with olive oil, vinegar, a clove or two of garlic, salt, pepper, and a little sugar.

**Cook up a beet pasta sauce** of sautéed beet greens and garlic, cubed cooked beets, and fresh orange and lime juice, seasoned with salt and pepper. Toss with hot fettucine and garnish with toasted pine nuts and crumbled feta.

**Roast beets with other root vegetables** such as carrots, parsnips, potatoes, onions, and turnips. Toss with olive oil and a fragrant medley of cinnamon, cumin, coriander, and paprika, spiked with a pinch of cayenne. Serve over couscous with a thin sauce of minted yogurt.

**Blend a beautiful pink borscht to serve cold.** Boil or pressure-cook beets, saving the cooking liquid. Cut the beets into chunks and purée in a blender, using a little cooking liquid to thin, as necessary. Stir in more of the liquid to get a nice soup consistency. Season with salt, pepper, and fresh lemon juice. Stir in a generous spoonful of sour cream, chopped parsley, and chopped dill, chives, or mint. Serve chilled, with more sour cream.



## Roasted Beets with White Balsamic & Citrus Dressing

Serves four.

FOR ROASTING THE BEETS:

**1/2 lb. beets (4 to 5 medium)**

**2 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil**

**1/4 tsp. kosher salt**

FOR THE DRESSING:

**1/4 cup strained fresh orange juice**

**1 Tbs. white balsamic vinegar**

**1 tsp. fresh lemon juice**

**1/4 tsp. sea salt; more to taste**

**Freshly ground pepper**

**1 to 2 Tbs. chopped fresh chives (optional)**

Position a rack in the center of the oven and heat the oven to 450°F. Trim, peel, and cut the beets into 1-inch wedges. Discard the greens or save for another use. Put the beets in a shallow 9x13-inch (or similar) baking dish, toss them with the olive oil and salt until thoroughly coated, and then arrange them in a single layer. Roast the beets, stirring after 20 minutes, until tender when pierced with a fork or skewer and lightly browned on the edges, 30 to 40 minutes.

Meanwhile, whisk the orange juice, vinegar, lemon juice, salt, and pepper in a small bowl until the salt is dissolved.

Remove the beets from the oven and while they're still hot, drizzle the dressing over them, tossing to coat. Let the beets cool to room temperature to meld the flavors. Taste and add more salt, if necessary. Serve at room temperature or gently warmed, topped with the chives, if using.

Ruth Lively cooks, writes, and gardens in New Haven, Connecticut. ♦

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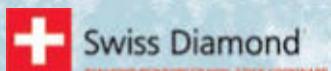
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A New Year's Resolution  
by Laura Giannatempo, Associate Editor, *Fine Cooking*

When it comes to dinner parties, I'm the ultimate procrastinator. So it's no surprise that last New Year's Eve I started cooking dinner for eight people at 4pm. No, not 4pm the day before but 4pm on December 31st.

For the rest of Laura's story, visit our Web site.  
To enter our Sweeps go to  
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# what's new

## A new look for Wüsthof knives

Wüsthof-Trident has long been my favorite knife-maker, so when samples of its new Ikon line arrived at *Fine Cooking*, I was first in line to take a test drive. The Ikon line is as much about form as it is function. Its distinguishing feature is its beautiful, sleek-looking handles, which are made of either high-impact synthetic material (the Classic Ikon line, shown at right) or environmentally friendly Mozambique ebony (the Blackwood Ikon line). I liked the comfortable grip of the 8-inch Blackwood Ikon chef's knife—it felt hefty, not heavy, and was perfectly balanced in my hand, wanting to tip neither forward nor back when I held it loosely. It performed as beautifully as every other Wüsthof knife I've used.

From past experience, I've learned that Wüsthofs start off super sharp and seem to stay that way for ages, even with a

lack of proper maintenance—a valuable trait if you happen to share my bad habit of not honing or sharpening your knives nearly enough. I trust the Ikon knives will share that trait.

When it comes to knives, though, what works for one person may not work for another because everyone's hands are different. You might love Wüsthofs as much as I do, or you might not. If you're in the market for a new knife, try to visit a shop where you can handle a variety of knives to find what feels best for you.

If that's not possible, you can buy the Classic Ikon at Cooking.com. The Blackwood Ikon line, however, is available only at Williams-Sonoma stores and on its Web site.

—Jennifer Armentrout,  
test kitchen manager



Wüsthof knives	28
Sleek & gentle scraper	28
Refrigerator thermometer	30
Update on stainless cookware	30
Review: Large skillets by Lisa Waddle	32



## Gentle hand tool

This angled scraper-spatula from Ar+Cook (pronounced Art and Cook), a Brooklyn-based utensil company, is as useful as it is sleek. The steel-cored silicone head has just enough give around the edges to bend and slip beneath crêpes or pancakes, and it's flexible enough to scrape a bowl clean of batter. The slim shape makes it useful where a full-size spatula wouldn't fit, such as lifting muffins and brownies from nonstick pans. The spatula is \$12 and is part of a line of nearly

50 utensils (each is less than \$20). You can see the entire collection and find links to an online store at [Artandcook.com](http://Artandcook.com).

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update

## Stainless cookware

**Le Creuset**, known for its colorful enameled cast iron, has introduced a line of stainless-steel skillets, casseroles, and stock pots. I particularly like the chef's pan, a 3½-quart cross between a sauté and a stir-fry pan. The curved sides are high enough to contain a mass of vegetables for sautéing, yet the pan is wide enough to reduce a sauce, and the flat bottom nicely sears fish or chicken fillets. It features a helper handle and lid, is three-ply stainless over an aluminum core, and has a magnetized exterior, making it compatible with induction cooktops. The chef's pan shown here is \$160 at ChefTools.com, where you can see the entire stainless-steel line.



**Lodge Manufacturing** now offers the Lodge Signature Series, a line of pans that combines the great heat conducting of cast iron with attractive, stay-cool stainless handles. We like the sturdy rivets and the handsome look of these pre-sea-

soned skillets, grill pans, casseroles, and Dutch ovens. The bling doesn't come cheap, though: While a 10-inch traditional Lodge Logic chef skillet is \$18, a 10-inch skillet in the Lodge Signature line costs \$90. Visit Lodgemfg.com.



## Check your temp



Food safety experts call 40° to 140°F the danger zone, where bacteria thrive, doubling every 20 minutes. I was shocked to find my refrigerator registered 44°F. But I'm not alone: A recent survey found that 80% of home refrigerators were set too warm. A basic refrigerator or freezer thermometer is a small investment to make sure you're storing food at the proper temperature and maintaining peak quality. I particularly like this Chaney Instrument model 03128 because suction cups mount it to the side wall of the fridge or freezer, out of the way, unlike other versions that hang from a rack or perch on a shelf. At only 5 inches long, the stainless-steel thermometer has blue bars indicating the ideal temperature for your freezer (-10° to 0°F) and refrigerator (33° to 40°F). Retail price is \$10, and you can buy it at Amazon.com.

## Chef's Mat by Gel Pro

Finally, you can spend time in the kitchen creating your favorite meals without the pain and discomfort

caused by hard kitchen floors! As seen on HGTV, Gel Pro Mats are filled with a soft gel that makes standing on even the hardest kitchen floor a pleasure. These innovative mats are scientifically engineered to absorb shock and reduce pain-causing pressure. Enjoy time spent in the kitchen even if you suffer from back pain, foot pain or arthritis. Gel Pro Mats have a beautiful woven leather look with a non-slip bottom

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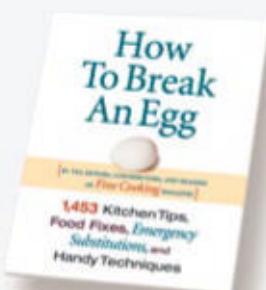
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review

# Large Skillets

BY MARYELLEN DRISCOLL

**M**any of our recipes call for a large skillet, preferably a 12-inch pan. We love its generous size for searing steaks, sautéing more than just a couple of boneless chicken breasts, making a quick weeknight stir-fry, or sear-roasting a pork tenderloin for company. It's a pan that definitely gets a lot of use, and that's why it's good to own a high-performance model. After testing nine such pans, the good news is, we found a variety of excellent options. Each has its own appeal, so there's a pan, we hope, for everyone.

## Key pan features

As we cooked (see How We Tested, far right), we discovered that these features were key:

**Size of cook surface.** Manufacturers measure skillets from rim to rim, but these pans have sloped sides, so the flat cooking surface can vary. One of the 12-inch pans we tested had such dramatically angled sides that the actual cook surface was just 8½ inches—barely large enough to accommodate two boneless chicken breasts. We found the ideal cook surface to be 9½ to 10 inches; anything bigger tends to heat unevenly.

**Rolled rim.** Whether we're making a pan sauce or a stir-fry, we appreciate pans with a rim that lets you "pour" relatively cleanly.

**Balance.** A pan this large may be a bit cumbersome, but maneuvering it shouldn't cause undue strain. A well-designed handle will make the pan feel balanced. And a helper handle (a small loop handle opposite the main handle) can make lifting a lot easier.

**A stay-cool handle.** Whether you're lifting or tilting the pan, the handle

should provide a comfortable, safe grip. And it can be neither of those if it's too hot to handle. The handles on the pans we tested did get hot near the pan. We were OK with that, so long as the heat didn't run more than a couple inches up the handle and there was enough room to get a comfortable grip.

## Key capabilities

We found that the following capabilities made all the difference in a pan's performance. While most of the nine pans in our review could do some of these things, our top choices, featured at right, could do them all well.

### The best pans conduct heat evenly.

With just about all of the pans, it took time for the heat to spread evenly over the pan's cook surface. The first part of the pan to get hot was the area directly over the burner flame. But with the better pans, the heat then proceeded to spread evenly to the outer edges without overheating in the area that became hot first.

**They also conduct heat at a steady rate.** Plenty of pans heat up quickly but then become too hot and require you to lower the heat. The best pans in our tests responded well to heat, maintaining a steady surface temperature at high or low heats; this consistency gives you more control when cooking.

**Our top choices recover quickly from heat loss.** In our stir-frying test, we cooked ingredients in batches. The best pans stayed nice and hot, so that every time we added new raw ingredients, they cooked at the desired fast clip. In pans that needed time to rebound after the addition of ingredients, the stir-fry had a steam-cooked quality.



Best  
Overall

## CIA Masters Collection 12-inch fry pan

\$200 at [MetroKitchen.com](http://MetroKitchen.com)

Cook surface: 10 inches

Weight: 4.4 pounds

Even at high heat, cooking with this pan always felt controlled. Onions developed a rich fond in the pan, chicken breasts browned beautifully, and the butter used to sauté the chicken never began to burn, resulting in a superb pan sauce (sauces made in half the tested pans were tainted with burned butter particles due to overheating). We appreciated the helper handle on this pan, because at more than 4 pounds, it's a tad difficult to lift, and the tall arch on the long handle only compounds the issue for anyone who's less than, say, 6 feet tall.

**Construction notes:** This 7-ply pan has four layers of aluminum and a copper core layer sandwiched between the pan's stainless-steel interior and exterior layers. And it's clad, meaning the inner heat-conducting metal layers extend across the bottom and all the way up the sides of the pan. It can be used on induction ranges.



## Best Deal

### Cuisinart MultiClad Pro Stainless 12-inch skillet

\$70 at CutleryAndMore.com  
Cook surface: 10½ inches  
Weight: 3.63 pounds

We liked how this more affordable pan's short, subtly flared sides gave it an open, accessible feel and extra cook surface. Onions sautéed evenly, as did chicken, although the fond development wasn't as rich as in some other pans. It stir-fried like a champ—at a fast but not unmanageable clip and without losing stride when a fresh batch of ingredients was added.

**Construction notes:** This pan has a thick aluminum core bonded to a stainless-steel interior and a brushed stainless exterior. The aluminum core runs across the pan's bottom and up its sides.

## Reliable

### KitchenAid 12-inch clad skillet

\$106 at Pans.com  
Cook surface: 9 inches  
Weight: 3.78 pounds

As in the CIA pan, sautéed onions caramelized evenly across the full cook surface of this pan. It ran a little hotter than the CIA and Cuisinart pans, but in a controlled fashion. (A slight heat adjustment easily resolves this, when needed.) This tendency to run hot worked great for stir-frying. Unfortunately, the handle gets hot in the 3 inches closest to the pan, leaving just 5½ inches relatively cool to touch.

**Construction notes:** This 5-ply pan has three heat-conducting metal layers (including an aluminum core that extends all the way up the pan's sides) sandwiched between the pan's stainless-steel interior and exterior layers.

## The Classic

### All-Clad stainless-steel 12-inch fry pan

\$135 at CooksWares.com  
Cook surface: 9½ inches  
Weight: 3 pounds

Despite more and more commercial-style pans being introduced to the market, this pan continues to hold a place of esteem—and deservedly. Like the KitchenAid pan, it ran a little hotter than some of our other top picks (though not at the expense of heat evenness or manageability), and this was an advantage when it came to fast cooking. In the stir-fry test, it stayed good and hot, cooking the chicken and vegetables quickly (no steaming) and in a controlled fashion.

**Construction notes:** This 3-ply, clad pan has an aluminum core that runs across the surface and up the sides. It can be used on induction ranges.

## How We Tested

We used the following criteria to select the skillets in our review. Each pan had to:

Be at least 12 inches in diameter but no more than 13 inches (rim edge to rim edge).

Have a rounded edge and sloped sides.

Have a stainless-steel exterior and interior.

Be oven safe to 500°F (for sear-roasting).

Be available through more than one retail source (i.e. not exclusive to any one vendor).

Cost no more than \$200.

We used the following three tests to evaluate the pans:

**Sautéed onions started cold in the pan.** To evaluate rate of heat conduction and evenness of heat.

**Sautéed chicken breasts followed by a quick, wine-based pan sauce.**

To evaluate evenness of heat, depth of browning and development of fond (caramelized drippings), rate of heat conduction, ease of pan maneuverability, and ability to pour liquids.

**Stir-fried chicken and vegetables.** To evaluate pan performance over high heat, ability to efficiently regain heat after the addition of ingredients, pan's overall maneuverability, and ability of handles to stay cool.

Tests were conducted over a 10,200-Btu gas burner.

The other pans tested: Calphalon Contemporary stainless 12-inch omelet pan, Emeril stainless 12-inch fry pan, J.A. Henckels International Classic clad 12-inch fry pan, Viking Professional Cookware 13-inch fry pan, and World Cuisine 12½-inch stainless "Executive" fry pan.

Maryellen Driscoll is an editor at large for Fine Cooking. ♦



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## Winning tip

### Keep cake layers intact when moving

Cake layers will often break when you try to lift them after splitting them in half horizontally. I was taught to slide cardboard rounds in between to make it easier, but I don't always have a supply on hand. Now I use the bottoms from my tart pans. They are so thin that they slide easily between the layers and work perfectly to lift the cake and move it to a rack or onto a frosted layer.

—Mary Wang, Allendale, New Jersey

### Use a straw to fill kitchen sink soap dispenser

I love the soap dispenser that is a part of my new kitchen sink. However, adding liquid soap can be a challenge, as the soap bubbles up and makes a mess. Now I put a flexible plastic drinking straw into the opening and then add the liquid soap. The air escapes through the straw, so the soap doesn't bubble up. Just be sure to bend the straw first, or it will fall all the way into the dispenser.

—Rosemary Weber, Dunlap, Illinois



### Preserve herbs in vinegar

Fresh herbs are expensive, and they're usually sold in bunches too large to use in just one recipe. To avoid throwing out leftovers, I put them in sterilized canning jars or recycled wine bottles. I heat vinegar to just below the boiling point, pour it over the herbs, and then seal. I let the bottles sit for 12 days, and I have wonderful flavored vinegar for salads or marinades, or for gifts.

—Linda K. Fisher-Perue,  
Saratoga, Wyoming

### Thermos keeps cocktails cold

Instead of a cocktail shaker, I use a thermos to mix drinks. The lid makes it easy to measure, and any leftovers stay cold.

—Samantha Turnbull,  
Valencia, California

### Replacement beaker for immersion blender

I love my immersion blender, but the beaker that came with it cracked almost immediately. I've found that 16-ounce plastic ricotta and sour cream containers make a perfect substitute. They are just the right width for the blade and tall enough to prevent splatter when mixing liquids.

—Erika Szymanski,  
Rochester, New York



## Shoe-horn that muffin out of the pan

I found my latest kitchen helper in an unlikely place—my closet. I had an unused shoe horn that turned out to be just the right shape for lifting muffins out of their tins. The horn works gently and doesn't mangle even the most delicate muffins.

—Sandy Ery, Martinsburg, West Virginia

## Try smoked duck in place of bacon

My husband is an amateur chef with a fine repertoire of classic dishes. When we married six years ago, it was a challenge to adapt some of his favorites, like pasta carbonara and cassoulet, to my decades-old practice of eating only fish and poultry. His solution: smoked duck in place of ham, bacon, and prosciutto. The taste is still rich and flavorful.

—Ellen Kirschman,  
Redwood City, California

## Mustard seeds add flavor to oil

I make the most amazingly flavorful salad dressings with sherry vinegar and my own mustard oil, which I make by infusing grapeseed oil with toasted mustard seeds. You can also make vanilla oil with a vanilla bean and grapeseed oil. This is great for baking.

—Josie Ross, Portland, Oregon

## Another use for leftover vegetables

I hate throwing out the small bits of leftover raw vegetables from salads or side dishes. Now I put these small amounts in a container in the refrigerator and at the end of the week, I chop them finely in a food processor and add them to plain cream cheese. The result is a lovely veggie cream cheese that's perfect for weekend bagels.

—Diane Skowron, Brooklyn, New York

## Power tool gives new life to wooden cutting boards

Despite all the new cutting board materials available, I still love using my wooden boards. To keep them smooth and to repair scratches from my knives, I periodically go over them with an electric sander until they are smooth again. I then coat them with mineral oil to keep them from drying out. This simple process has extended the life of my beautiful boards.

—Carole Beauchamp,  
Durham, North Carolina

## Flattening crumb crusts with a film canister

Getting crumb crusts or pastry dough to fit in a mini muffin tin can be a challenge. I've found that a 35-mm film case makes a great tool to fit the crusts smoothly and evenly and works better than my fingers.

—Helene Stone, Highland Park, Illinois



## TOO GOOD TO FORGET

From *Fine Cooking* #14

## When whisking, a damp towel holds the bowl

Holding a bowl can be tricky when you whisk with one hand and slowly pour an ingredient into the bowl with the other. A damp towel wrapped around the bottom of the bowl goes a long way towards holding the bowl in place.

—Mary Sullivan,  
Concord, California



## Use paper muffin cups for melting butter

When I need to melt a small amount of butter for a recipe, rather than dirty a bowl I use a paper muffin cup and put it in the microwave for a few seconds. This only works for a few tablespoons of butter that won't spill out of the cup once melted, and you need to take care not to slosh the hot liquid when removing it from the microwave. But anything that saves me washing another bowl is great.

—Christina Williams,  
South Norwalk, Connecticut ♦

# Roast Pork for Today &



**Roasted Pork Loin with  
Maple-Mustard Crust**

# Tomorrow

BY TONY ROSENFELD

Start with a simple roasted pork loin and transform the leftovers into three more meals during the week



Grilled Roast Pork  
Cubano Sandwiches



Chinese Pork &  
Mushroom Wraps



New Mexican Pork  
& Green Chile Stew

The versatility of pork loin is underrated. Sure, it serves as the perfect centerpiece for all sorts of occasions—a dinner party, the holidays, or a Sunday night meal. But pork loin is also good for leftovers—so good that I suggest you set out to create these leftovers intentionally. Just roast a large pork loin, serve some of it for a dressy dinner one night and then turn the rest into a stew, sandwiches, and a stir-fry on subsequent nights.

I'm not new to this formula of making extra food to serve as the base for future meals—I wrote a whole book on roasted chicken and how to use its leftovers. But like chicken, the other white meat also shines in later

go-rounds. All you need to do is buy more pork than you might for just one meal (a 4-pound boneless loin or two 2-pound loins will do). And while you're at the market, don't forget to pick up the supporting ingredients for the following nights' meals. Then roast the pork and feed off your not-so-hard work.

**Brine the pork loin before roasting for a juicy texture.** The biggest problem with pork loin is that it can become remarkably dry. You've probably heard the sad story before: Today's pork is bred to be lean, which makes for tricky roasting. To counteract this dryness, I soak the pork in a brine—a liquid solution of salt and sugar. This step takes minimal effort, and it's worth it.

Just set the pork in a mixture of apple cider (or juice), garlic, and thyme as you're heading out the door to work, and when you return, the meat will have picked up some juiciness and a healthy punch of flavor.

**Start the roast with high heat and then turn down the oven.** To keep things simple, I avoid a stovetop sear and instead cook the pork from start to finish in the oven. I've found that beginning the roasting with high heat gives the meat (and the maple-mustard glaze with which I brush it) a nice, browned crust. Then I lower the oven's temperature and cook until the pork coasts to an even doneness—145°F on an instant-read thermometer. At this temperature, the meat will

have a slightly pinkish hue, but no worries: it's safe. More important, when cooked to this doneness, the meat will still be juicy and tender—great for eating now as well as for leftover preparations later. Do be sure to let the meat rest a good 10 minutes before carving so that it retains its juices.

**Use the leftovers in several ways.** You should have a couple of pounds of pork left after the first night's meal, enough to go into two or three other meals. (The mild sweetness of the mustard glaze goes nicely in most leftover preparations, so leave the crust untouched in the areas where there's no fat or gristle; namely, the bottom and sides of the loin.)

I like to add the pork to stews, like the New Mexican Pork & Green Chile Stew on p. 41. I start with potatoes, aromatics, and chicken broth and then stir in diced pork toward the end of cooking. Roasted chiles add some heat, while a sprinkling of chopped fresh cilantro and oregano keeps with the dish's New Mexican feel. Leftover pork also goes great in sandwiches. My favorite is a grilled "Cubano," in which thinly sliced roast pork joins ham, Swiss cheese, pickles, and mustard on a light roll. Leftover pork also shines in quick stir-fries. Meet my take on mu shu pork—Chinese wraps filled with a spiced stir-fry of cabbage, mushrooms, egg, and sliced pork.

Of course there are many other ways you can enjoy the leftover pork (see the sidebar on p. 40 for more ideas), which will last a good four to five days before you need to use it up. Just get a head start with the roasted pork loin and let your creativity take hold.

## At the market: Buy a whole pork loin

While most markets carry boneless pork loins, they're often sold as half loins, weighing about 2 pounds. But for evenness and simplicity of cooking, try to get a whole loin. The loin may have an outer layer of fat and gristle, which imparts flavor during roasting. It's best to remove this layer, however, when preparing leftovers. Avoid so-called extra-tender or guaranteed-tender pork—it's been treated with a sodium solution and has a spongy texture.



## Roasted Pork Loin with Maple-Mustard Crust

*Serves four as a main dish, with enough leftovers to make all the remaining dishes.*

I like to leave some fat on the outside of the pork because it browns beautifully and bastes the roast. I also make sure the pork sits in the brine for at least 8 hours but preferably 16 to 18 hours for the juiciest results. Finally, I scatter wedges of fennel and apple in the pan to absorb the wonderful drippings during cooking. They also prevent the glaze from scorching on the bottom of the pan.

### FOR THE BRINE:

- 8 cups cold apple cider or juice**
- ¾ cup kosher salt**
- ¼ cup light brown sugar**
- 2 cloves garlic, smashed**
- 3 sprigs fresh thyme**
- One 4-lb. boneless pork loin roast (or two 2-lb. loins), trimmed only if it has a thick layer of fat**

### FOR THE ROAST:

- ¼ cup maple syrup**
- 3 Tbs. whole-grain Dijon mustard**
- 2 tsp. chopped fresh thyme**
- ¾ tsp. freshly ground black pepper; more to taste**
- 1 large fennel bulb or 2 small bulbs, quartered, cored, and thinly sliced**
- 1 Granny Smith apple, peeled, cored, and cut into ½-inch pieces**
- 1 Tbs. olive oil**
- ½ tsp. kosher salt**

**Brine the pork:** Combine 2 cups of the apple cider or juice with the salt, brown sugar, garlic, and thyme in a 3- to 4-quart saucepan and bring to a boil over high heat, stirring so the salt and sugar dissolve, about 3 minutes. Add the remaining apple cider or juice and cool to

A coating of maple syrup and whole-grain mustard gives this roast a fine caramelized crust.

room temperature. Transfer to a large container, add the pork, cover, and refrigerate for at least 8 hours and up to 18 hours.

**Roast the pork:** Position a rack in the center of the oven and heat the oven to 450°F. In a small bowl, mix the maple syrup, mustard, thyme, and pepper. Drain the pork and pat dry with paper towels. Brush the pork all over with the mustard mixture.

In a medium bowl, toss the fennel and apple with the oil, salt, and a few generous grinds of pepper. Scatter the mixture in the bottom of a large roasting pan (large enough to hold the pork with a couple of inches of space around the perimeter). Put the pork, fat side up, on top of the fennel and apples. Roast the pork until the crust just starts to brown, about 15 minutes. Reduce the heat to 350°F and continue cooking until an instant-read thermometer inserted into the thickest part of the loin registers 145°F, 30 to 50 minutes more.

Let rest for 10 minutes and then thinly slice a quarter to a third of the pork. Serve, topped with the fennel, apple, and juices. Allow the remaining pork to cool to room temperature, wrap well with foil, and refrigerate for up to 5 days before using in the recipes that follow.

A garlic-lime  
mojo gives  
this sandwich  
a Cuban flair.



## Grilled Roast Pork Cubano Sandwiches

Serves four.

I like to brush the interior of this sandwich with a mojo, a flavorful garlic-lime mixture. Because it's not easy to find Cuban bread in my area, I use sub or bulky rolls, which acquire a crusty texture when pressed during cooking. If you have a panini grill, you can use it instead of pan-cooking the sandwiches.

FOR THE MOJO:

- 1 medium clove garlic
- ½ tsp. kosher salt
- 1 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 Tbs. fresh lime juice
- 1 Tbs. chopped fresh cilantro

FOR THE SANDWICHES:

- 4 oval-shaped sub or bulky rolls, split
- 3 Tbs. whole-grain mustard
- 6 oz. thinly sliced leftover Roasted Pork Loin with Maple-Mustard Crust, from the recipe opposite
- ¼ lb. thinly sliced ham
- 4 thick slices Swiss cheese (about 4 oz.)
- 2 large dill pickles, thinly sliced
- 2 Tbs. unsalted butter, softened

**Make the mojo:** Peel and mince the garlic. Sprinkle with the salt and mash to a paste by repeatedly scraping over it with the side of a chef's knife. Transfer to a small bowl and mix in the olive oil, lime juice, and cilantro. Let sit for 5 minutes.

**Make the sandwiches:** Set a 12-inch cast-iron or other heavy-duty skillet over medium heat. Brush the interior of the rolls

with the mojo and the mustard, and then stack the bottom part of each roll with equal amounts of the pork, ham, cheese, and pickles. Top each sandwich with its upper half and spread the butter on the top and bottom of each sandwich.

Set the sandwiches in the pan (if you can't fit all 4, start with 2 and cook in batches, keeping the first batch warm in a low oven while cooking the second batch), top with a flat lid and a couple of heavy cans to weight down the sandwiches (or use grill presses if you have them), and cook the sandwiches until they brown, about 4 minutes. Flip, weight down the sandwiches in the same manner, and cook until browned on the second side, about 4 minutes. Cut in half and serve.

## Chinese Pork & Mushroom Wraps

Serves to six to eight.

If you've never eaten the Chinese-American restaurant classic mu shu pork, think of it as an Asian take on a soft burrito. Serve these bundles with steamed rice.

**6 cups** thinly sliced green cabbage (about  $\frac{3}{4}$  lb.)  
**3/4 tsp.** kosher salt; more to taste  
**2 Tbs.** hoisin sauce (I prefer Koon Chun or Lee Kum Kee brands), plus  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup for serving  
**1 Tbs.** soy sauce  
**2 tsp.** Asian sesame oil  
**1 tsp.** rice vinegar  
**3 Tbs.** canola or peanut oil  
**2 cups** match-stick-cut leftover Roasted Pork Loin with Maple-Mustard Crust, from the recipe on p. 38 (about  $\frac{1}{2}$  lb.)  
**1 bunch** scallions, trimmed, whites and light-green parts thinly sliced and green parts cut into 2-inch pieces (keep separate)  
**1/2 lb.** shiitake mushrooms, stemmed and thinly sliced (about 4 cups)  
**2 large** eggs, beaten  
**2 tsp.** minced fresh ginger  
**2 tsp.** minced garlic  
**6 to 8** medium flour tortillas (about 8 inch diameter), warmed

Put the cabbage in a colander over the sink and toss with  $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp. of the salt. Let sit for

10 minutes. Transfer to a baking sheet lined with paper towels and pat dry.

In a small bowl, mix the 2 Tbs. hoisin sauce with the soy sauce, sesame oil, and vinegar. Set aside.

In a 12-inch heavy-duty nonstick skillet, heat 1 Tbs. of the oil over medium-high heat until shimmering. Add the pork, sprinkle lightly with salt and cook, stirring, until it starts to brown around the edges, about 3 minutes. Transfer to a large plate.

Add 1 Tbs. of the remaining oil to the pan and once it's shimmering, add the scallion whites and the mushrooms, sprinkle with the remaining  $\frac{1}{4}$  tsp. salt, and cook, stirring occasionally, until they brown and soften, 2 to 3 minutes. Push the mushroom mixture to one side of the pan and add the eggs. Cook, scrambling and breaking up with a wooden spoon or spatula into small pieces, until just set, about 1 minute. Transfer the contents of the skillet to the plate with the pork.

Add the remaining 1 Tbs. oil, and once it's hot, add the scallion greens, cabbage, ginger, and garlic. Cook, stirring occasionally, until softened, about 2 minutes. Add the reserved hoisin mixture and the pork mixture to the cabbage and stir to distribute the hoisin. Cook, stirring occasionally, for 1 minute to meld the flavors. Serve family style: Tell diners to spread about 1 Tbs. of the hoisin down the center of a tortilla, arrange a generous amount of the pork mixture over the hoisin, and wrap in the tortilla, burrito-style.

## Other ideas for leftover pork

**Sandwiches:** Like homemade roast turkey, roast pork is a treat in a brown bag lunch. Layer thin slices of the meat with sharp cheese, greens, and sliced fruit like apple or pear.

**Stews:** Dice leftover pork and toss it into stews with a Mediterranean accent. Braise some green beans, olives, and tomatoes and then fold in the pork toward the end of cooking. Or prepare a shellfish stew with mussels, clams, and shrimp and toss in the pork as a meaty counterpoint.

**Pasta:** Brown pieces of the pork and toss with cabbage, Parmigiano, and penne for a quick weeknight pasta, or stir-fry slivers of pork with garlic, bean sprouts, and Chinese egg noodles for a pork lo mein.

**Salads:** Cut the pork into strips and set atop a warm spinach salad with caramelized onions and a bacon vinaigrette. Or dice the pork and scatter across romaine with avocado, corn, and tomatoes, for a Cobb salad.



Though in restaurants, pancakes wrap the filling, here flour tortillas make a fine substitution.



Chiles power  
this piquant stew.

I prefer the intensity  
of Anaheims,  
though poblanos  
are delicious, too.

## New Mexican Pork & Green Chile Stew

Serves four.

- 3 fresh Anaheim or poblano chiles
- 1 tsp. extra-virgin olive oil
- ¾ tsp. kosher salt; more to taste
- Freshly ground black pepper
- ½ lb. bacon (about 4 slices), cut crosswise into thin strips
- 1 yellow onion, cut into ½-inch dice
- 2 large cloves garlic, minced
- 1 Tbs. ground cumin
- 1 cup lager-style beer, such as Budweiser
- 2 cups low-salt chicken broth
- 1¼ lb. Yukon gold potatoes, peeled and cut into ¾-inch dice
- ½ cup chopped fresh cilantro
- 3 Tbs. chopped fresh oregano
- 1 bay leaf
- 2½ cups medium-diced leftover Roasted Pork Loin with Maple-Mustard Crust, from the recipe on p. 38 (about ¾ lb.)
- 2 tsp. cider vinegar; more to taste
- ½ cup crumbled queso fresco or feta cheese

Position an oven rack 6 inches from the broiler element and heat the broiler to high. Toss the chiles with the oil, ¼ tsp. of the salt, and a few generous grinds of pepper. Set on a rimmed baking sheet lined with aluminum foil and broil the chiles, flipping every 1 to 2 minutes, until they brown, blister, and blacken all over, about 5 minutes total. Remove the chiles from the oven, wrap in the foil, and let cool to room temperature. Then peel off the skin and core and seed them. Cut them into ½-inch pieces.

Cook the bacon in a large Dutch oven over medium heat until it browns and renders much of its fat, about 6 minutes. Using a slotted spoon, transfer to a plate lined with paper towels. Add the onion and garlic to the pot, sprinkle with the remaining ½ tsp. salt, and cook, stirring, until they soften and brown in places, about 6 minutes. Add the cumin and cook, stirring, for 30 seconds.

Raise the heat to high, add the beer, and cook, stirring to pick up any browned bits on the bottom of the pot, until it has almost evaporated, 4 to 6 minutes. Add the chicken broth, potatoes, half of the cilantro, the oregano, bay leaf, and the chiles and bring to a boil. Reduce to a gentle simmer, cover, and cook until the potatoes are just barely tender, about 15 minutes. Stir in the pork and vinegar and cook until the potatoes are completely tender, about 10 more minutes. Season to taste with more salt, pepper, and vinegar. Serve, sprinkled with the bacon, cheese, and the remaining cilantro.

*Tony Rosenfeld is a contributing editor for Fine Cooking.* ♦

# Pasta on the Side

Move over, rice and potatoes—little pastas like orzo, Israeli couscous, and fregola make a delicious change of pace

BY TASHA DESERIO

In my family, we're big fans of starchy side dishes. I think of my mother standing at the kitchen sink, rattling off her plan for dinner: meat, vegetable, starch—always one of each. To this day, I have a hard time truly enjoying a meal that doesn't have a starchy element. But one can eat only so much rice and potatoes, and I generally don't like to serve standard pasta dishes on the side.

Luckily, I've recently developed an appreciation for little pastas—sort of a cross between rice and pasta, and the perfect side dish. My young son's love of all things little prompted me to buy orzo, and I've learned that it can be as richly satisfying as risotto. Ever since, I've been experimenting with other little pastas; fregola sarda (Sardinian couscous) is my newfound favorite, but Israeli couscous is a close second.

**In general, cooking little pasta is like cooking any other pasta;** just check frequently to avoid overcooking, as it can turn to mush if ignored. You'll want to bring a large pot of water to a rolling boil and add a generous amount of salt before adding the pasta—the water should taste almost like seawater (the pasta absorbs only a small amount of the salt). The cooking time will vary depending on

the type of pasta and the brand, but you can anticipate that it will cook in slightly less time than other pastas.

**I've also discovered that some little pastas, such as Israeli couscous, can be cooked like rice pilaf**—in a covered sauté pan with other ingredients (see the recipe on p. 45). As with rice, you want to lightly toast the couscous in the pan, stirring constantly, before adding the liquid. This helps the couscous cook more evenly. After you've added the liquid, reduce the heat to a simmer and cook until the couscous is tender and has absorbed all of the liquid. Again, the cooking time will vary from brand to brand.

**Little pastas are a great side for just about any dish.** They're particularly nice with rich braises, roasted meats and poultry, or anything with a pan sauce that can mingle with the pasta. Try one of the recipes here, or just cook the pasta simply and toss it with butter and herbs. Or try adding one of them to soup in place of rice or another pasta shape. (I like chicken and mushroom soup with fregola sarda.) I encourage you to experiment with other varieties of small pasta that you may find at the market—grocery stores carry some, but specialty markets tend to have a nice selection.



## Fregola with Wild Mushrooms, Sherry & Cream

Serves six as a side dish or three to four as a first course.

If you can't find chanterelles, hedgehogs, or porcini, substitute cremini. This pasta is delicious with seared duck breast or roast pork.

**3/4 lb. wild mushrooms, such as chanterelles, hedgehogs, porcini, or a mix**  
**1 1/2 Tbs. unsalted butter**  
**1 1/2 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil**  
**Kosher salt**  
**2 medium shallots (4 oz.), finely diced**  
**1/2 Tbs. chopped fresh thyme**  
**3 Tbs. dry sherry**  
**1 cup heavy cream**  
**Freshly ground black pepper**  
**2 Tbs. coarsely chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley**  
**1 1/4 cups fregola sarda**  
**About 1/2 cup freshly grated Parmigiano-Reggiano, for sprinkling**



Gently clean the mushrooms with a damp cloth or mushroom brush to remove any dirt or debris and use a paring knife to remove any dark spots or tough stem ends. If the mushrooms appear sandy, dip them quickly into a large basin of water and drain. Leave small, bite-size mushrooms whole; cut larger mushrooms into 1½-inch pieces.

Set a 12-inch skillet over medium-high heat and add ½ Tbs. of the butter and ½ Tbs. of the oil. Swirl the pan to melt the butter and add half of the mushrooms and a generous pinch of salt. Cook, stirring occasionally, until the mushrooms are cooked through and golden brown, about 6 minutes; the cooking time will vary, though, depending on the type of mushroom and its water content. (Avoid stirring the mushrooms too frequently, or they won't brown well.) Transfer the mushrooms to a plate. Add another ½ Tbs. butter and ½ Tbs. oil to the pan and cook the remaining mushrooms. Combine all of the cooked mushrooms. When they're cool enough to handle, chop them coarsely.

Return the pan to medium-high heat. (It's not necessary to wash the pan unless

it's scorched.) Add the remaining ½ Tbs. butter and ½ Tbs. oil. Swirl the pan to melt the butter and add the shallots, thyme, and a pinch of salt. Reduce the heat to medium and cook, stirring occasionally, until the shallots are tender and golden brown, about 4 minutes. Add the sherry and cook, scraping the bottom of the pan, until the sherry has evaporated, about 1 minute. Return the mushrooms to the pan, add the cream, season with salt and a generous amount of black pepper, and cook until the cream has thickened slightly, 2 to 4 minutes. Stir in the parsley and keep warm.

Bring a large pot of well-salted water to a boil over high heat. Add the fregola to the boiling water and cook until al dente, 10 to 14 minutes. Drain and immediately toss the fregola with the mushroom mixture. Season to taste with more salt and pepper if necessary. Transfer to a platter or individual plates, sprinkle with the Parmigiano, and serve.



## Fregola sarda,

or Sardinian couscous, is a type of pasta that's made by rubbing semolina and water into tiny pearls and then toasting them. Fregola is similar to Israeli couscous, but it's slightly larger. In Italy, it's often added to brothy stews or cooked as baked pasta. For sources, see p. 80.

## Orzo with Lemon, Garlic, Parmigiano & Herbs

Serves six to eight as a side dish.

Similar in texture to risotto, this dish is simple yet rich.

**3 Tbs. fresh lemon juice**  
**3 medium cloves garlic, finely chopped**  
**Kosher salt**  
**3 cups low-salt chicken broth**  
**5 Tbs. unsalted butter, cut into 5 pieces**  
**1 lb. orzo**  
**½ cup grated Parmigiano-Reggiano; more for sprinkling**  
**¼ cup chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley**  
**2 tsp. fresh thyme leaves, lightly chopped**  
**Freshly ground black pepper**

Combine the lemon juice, garlic, and a generous pinch of salt in a small bowl and set aside.

Bring a large pot of well-salted water to a boil over high heat.

Meanwhile, put the chicken broth in a medium (3-quart) saucepan and bring to a boil over medium-high heat. Boil until the broth has reduced to 1 cup, 20 to 30 minutes. Reduce the heat to low. Add the lemon-garlic mixture and whisk in the butter one piece at a time. Keep warm.

Cook the orzo in the boiling water until barely al dente, about 8 minutes. Drain and immediately toss with the broth mixture. Add the ½ cup Parmigiano and the parsley and thyme. Season to taste with salt and pepper and toss well to combine. Serve immediately, sprinkled with additional Parmigiano.



**Orzo**, a pasta that's similar in size and shape to rice, can resemble risotto in both flavor and richness when cooked and combined with broth and cheese. In the recipe above, I toss the orzo with buttery reduced chicken broth, fresh lemon juice, garlic, herbs, and Parmigiano. This pasta is also a great addition to soups and makes a wonderful pasta salad. Orzo is available in most supermarkets.





## Israeli Couscous with Saffron, Toasted Pine Nuts & Currants

*Serves four to six as a side dish.*

You can easily make this dish an hour or two in advance, let it sit at room temperature, and gently reheat it before serving (you may need to carefully break apart any clumps with a wooden spoon). But hold off on adding the pine nuts until the last minute, so they don't lose their texture.

- 4 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil**
- 1 medium yellow onion, cut into ¼-inch dice (1 ¼ cups)**
- 4 scallions, thinly sliced (white and green parts kept separate)**
- 30 saffron threads (about ½ tsp.), lightly toasted and crumbled**
- Pinch crushed red pepper flakes**
- Kosher salt**
- 2 medium cloves garlic, finely chopped**
- Generous pinch ground cinnamon**
- 1 ¾ cups Israeli couscous**
- ½ cup pine nuts, lightly toasted**
- ½ cup currants, soaked in warm water until tender and then drained**
- 3 Tbs. chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley**

Heat 2 Tbs. of the oil in a 10-inch straight-sided sauté pan over medium-high heat. Add the onion, scallion whites, saffron, red pepper flakes, and a generous pinch of salt. Reduce the heat to medium and cook, stirring occasionally, until the onion is tender and golden brown, 7 to 8 minutes. Stir in the remaining 2 Tbs. oil, the garlic, and cinnamon and continue to cook for 1 minute more. Add the couscous and 1 ½ tsp. salt and stir constantly until the couscous is lightly toasted (the color will turn a light brown), 2 to 3 minutes. Remove from the heat.

In a small saucepan, bring 2 cups of water to a boil over high heat. Add the water to the pan with the couscous, stir to combine, cover, and cook at a simmer over medium-low to low heat until the couscous is tender and has absorbed all of the liquid, about 10 minutes.

Add the pine nuts, currants, and parsley and toss to combine. Season to taste with more salt if necessary. Transfer to a platter or distribute among individual plates, sprinkle the scallion greens on top, and serve.



## Israeli Couscous,

also known as maftoul, is shaped like small pearls and is much larger than traditional North African couscous. It's lightly toasted in an open-flame oven, but if you're preparing it like rice pilaf, as I do, it benefits from being toasted again so that it will absorb the cooking liquid and yet remain al dente. For sources, see p. 80.

Tasha DeSerio is co-owner of Olive Green Catering in Berkeley, California. ♦



Fennel & orange salad



Pan-fried crisp fennel



Fennel layered with potatoes



Braised fennel

# Fennel

## The raw and the cooked

Try four delicious ways to get the most out of fennel's sweet anise flavor

BY ROSETTA COSTANTINO WITH JANET FLETCHER

**M**any Italians like to end a big meal with sliced raw fennel, also known as sweet anise, convinced that this crisp vegetable aids their digestion. I can't vouch for fennel's medicinal properties, but like many of my fellow Italians, I love its licorice-like flavor and crunchy texture. My parents, who were farmers, did not grow it when I was a child in rural Calabria—the "toe" of the Italian boot—because we lived in the hills, and fennel prefers the cool coast. Yet, I've eaten it enthusiastically for as long as I can remember. When I married a Sicilian, I learned even more ways to prepare fennel, as Sicilians are big fans. And in my current northern California home, I have access to fennel year-round, so I eat it in every possible way: raw in salads or as a simple snack, and cooked in a variety of satisfying side dishes.

### Enjoy it raw

Thin slices of raw fennel give a fresh, cool crunch to green salads—I particularly like it with arugula or baby greens. But one of my favorite winter salads (on p. 48) combines thinly sliced fennel with juicy orange segments, red onions, and black olives. It's light and refreshing, and I love the interplay of crisp, cool, salty, and sweet. I also like to eat strips of raw fennel as a snack, just as Americans reach for carrot or celery sticks.

**When using raw fennel, it's important to slice it thinly.** Large chunks of fennel can be fibrous, so I like to cut the bulbs lengthwise into slender slivers or crosswise into thin half moons (see directions at right).

Fennel will dry a bit after cutting, so if you need to cut it ahead, keep the slices wrapped in damp paper towels. The core is perfectly edible, and you can leave it if you like, but it can be a bit tough. I find that it's best to remove most or all of it when eating fennel raw.

### Cook it almost any way you want

Fennel is so versatile, it lends itself to almost any cooking method. It's delicious roasted at high temperatures, which turn the edges brown and crisp, or slowly sautéed in a bit of olive oil. But in my opinion, few things beat braised fennel. I slowly braise thick wedges with tomatoes, olives, capers, and a little water, and the results are luxurious: smooth and creamy with a sweet, tangy flavor. I also love the crunchy texture of pan-fried fennel slices. I parboil mine first, so they soften up a bit; then I coat them with egg and fine breadcrumbs and fry them in olive oil until the coating is crisp and golden. And for an Italian twist on a classic potato gratin, I layer thin slices of fennel with potato slices, breadcrumbs, and grated pecorino or Parmigiano.

No matter what method you use, fennel that's thoroughly cooked (be sure it has plenty of moisture or fat) becomes almost creamy, losing the crunch it has when raw but gaining in sweetness. Even the core becomes tender and mild, so I usually don't bother removing it when I cook fennel. Besides, it helps hold the wedges together.



## How to trim fennel

**1.** Cut off the fennel stalks at their base, where they join the bulb. Discard the stalks and feathery fronds or use the fronds as a garnish or salad ingredient; for ideas, see From Our Test Kitchen, p. 70.

**2.** Lightly trim the base of the bulb. Do not remove too much of the base, or the fennel layers will not hold together when you cut the bulb into wedges. Trim away any bruised areas. If the outer layer feels tough or spongy, remove it.

## It matters how you cut it

Always start by cutting trimmed fennel bulbs in half lengthwise through the core. If you intend to eat the fennel raw, it's best to remove most or all of the core, but if you're going to cook it, you can usually leave the core intact.

### Large wedges

Cut each half-bulb into four 1½-inch-thick wedges. Thick wedges are best for braising.



### Small wedges

Cut each half-bulb into ½-inch-wide wedges. Small wedges are ideal for pan-frying, slow sautéing, and roasting.



### Thin slices

Cut each bulb into quarters lengthwise, remove most or all of the core, and cut each quarter lengthwise into thin slivers (if you have a mandoline, use it to make the slices paper thin).

### Thin half-moons

Cut each half-bulb crosswise into thin half moons, until you reach the core (discard the core). Thin slices or half-moons are great raw in salads or as a snack, or cooked in gratin-type dishes.



## Pan-Fried Crisp Fennel (*Finocchi Dorati*)

Serves six to eight as an appetizer or side dish.

I serve these crisp wedges as a side dish with pork, lamb, or chicken, but you can also eat them as an appetizer with white wine. You can boil and coat the fennel up to 4 hours before frying.

To make fine, dry breadcrumbs, use a dense French or Italian country-style loaf. Cut it into 1-inch cubes and leave them on a tray at room temperature for several days until they are rock hard. Process them in a food processor until fine.

**1 large fennel bulb, trimmed  
( $\frac{3}{4}$  to 1 lb. after trimming;  
see directions, p. 47)**  
**2 Tbs. plus  $\frac{1}{4}$  tsp. kosher salt;  
more as needed**  
**2 large eggs**  
**Freshly ground black pepper**  
 **$\frac{1}{2}$  cup fine, dry homemade  
breadcrumbs**  
**2 Tbs. freshly grated pecorino or  
Parmigiano-Reggiano**  
**2 to  $2\frac{1}{2}$  cups extra-virgin olive oil  
for frying; more as needed**

Cut the fennel bulb in half lengthwise and then cut each half lengthwise into wedges that are  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch wide on the outside. You should get 12 to 16 wedges.

Bring about  $2\frac{1}{2}$  quarts of water to a boil in a 4-quart saucepan over high heat. Add 2 Tbs. of the salt and

**tip:** If you don't have a thermometer or your thermometer won't reach far enough into the oil to read accurately, you can test the oil temperature by adding a few breadcrumbs. If they sizzle immediately and float to the top, the oil is ready.

the fennel. Boil briskly until the fennel is tender, 5 to 8 minutes. Check for doneness by removing a wedge to taste it. Drain well and set aside to cool.

In a shallow bowl, beat the eggs with the remaining  $\frac{1}{4}$  tsp. salt and several grinds of pepper.

In another shallow bowl, mix the breadcrumbs with the cheese.

Working with one or two wedges at a time, dip in the beaten egg, making sure the exterior is well coated. Lift out with a fork, letting the excess egg drain off. Then dredge in the breadcrumbs, patting the breadcrumbs in place so they adhere (you want to coat them well). Keep the wedges compact; don't let them splay open. Set the wedges on a tray and continue until all are coated.

Put  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch of oil in a 10-inch straight-sided sauté pan, attach a candy thermometer to the side of the pan, and heat over medium-high heat. When the oil reaches  $375^{\circ}\text{F}$ , add as many wedges as will fit comfortably in a single layer. Don't crowd the pan. Cook until well browned on both sides, turning once with tongs. Total frying time should be about 1 minute. Transfer the wedges to a plate lined with paper towels and sprinkle lightly with salt. Continue frying, adding more oil to the pan as needed, until all the wedges are fried. Serve hot.



## Fennel & Orange Salad with Red Onion & Olives (*Insalata di Finocchi e Arance*)

Serves six.

This popular Sicilian salad is made with blood oranges when they are in season, but navel oranges work just as well. Serve it with roasted or grilled seafood. I like to bring the salad to the table with the layers intact and toss it at the table.

**One-half small red onion**  
**2 large navel oranges or blood oranges**  
**2 to 3 small fennel bulbs, trimmed  
(about 1 lb. total after trimming;  
see directions, p. 47)**  
**6 dry-cured black olives**  
**3 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil**  
 **$1\frac{1}{2}$  Tbs. fresh lemon juice**  
 **$\frac{3}{4}$  tsp. kosher salt**  
**1 tsp. chopped fresh mint**  
**Freshly ground black pepper**

Slice the onion half lengthwise as thinly as you can. Put the sliced onion in a bowl and cover with cold water to mellow its flavor and keep it crisp. Refrigerate for at least 15 minutes.

Working with one orange at a time, slice off both ends. Set the orange on a cutting board, one cut side down. With a sharp knife, cut away the peel (the zest and white pith) by slicing from top to



## Fennel Layered with Potatoes & Breadcrumbs

(*Tortiera di Finocchi e Patate*)

Serves eight.

Take care to make the potato slices equally thin so they cook evenly. A mandoline or other vegetable slicer makes the job easier, but you can also do it by hand with a sharp knife. To make fresh breadcrumbs, use a dense, day-old French or Italian country-style loaf. Cut the bread into 1-inch cubes and process in a food processor until fine. Serve the tortiera with roast lamb, pork, or chicken.

- 2 lb. yellow potatoes, such as Yukon Gold**
- 1 large fennel bulb, trimmed  
( $\frac{3}{4}$  to 1 lb. after trimming;  
see directions, p. 47)**
- 1 cup firmly packed fresh  
breadcrumbs**
- $\frac{1}{2}$  cup freshly grated pecorino  
(preferably Tuscan) or Parmigiano-Reggiano**
- 3 Tbs. finely chopped fresh flat-leaf  
parsley**
- 2 medium cloves garlic, minced**
- 6 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil, plus  
more for the baking dish**
- 2½ tsp. kosher salt**
- Freshly ground black pepper**

Peel the potatoes and slice them as thinly as possible, between  $\frac{1}{16}$  and  $\frac{1}{8}$  inch thick (use a mandoline if you have one). Put the sliced potatoes in a large bowl of cold water to keep them from browning.

Cut the fennel in half lengthwise. Slice the halved fennel crosswise as thinly as possible, between  $\frac{1}{16}$  and  $\frac{1}{8}$  inch thick. You should have about 4 cups.

In a bowl, combine the bread-crumbs, cheese, parsley, and garlic. Mix well with your hands, making sure the garlic is evenly distributed.

Position a rack in the center of the oven and heat the oven to 400°F.

Lightly oil the bottom and sides of a 9x13-inch baking dish.

Without draining the potatoes, use your hands to lift out about one-third of the slices and arrange them in the bottom of the baking dish, overlapping them slightly. (The water clinging

to them will generate steam as they bake.) Season with  $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp. of the salt and a couple of grinds of the pepper. Sprinkle the potatoes evenly with  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup of the breadcrumb mixture. Drizzle with 1 Tbs. of the oil. Top the potatoes with half of the sliced fennel, spreading it evenly. Sprinkle the fennel with  $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp. salt,  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup of the bread-crumb mixture, and 1 Tbs. of the oil. Repeat this layering process, ending with a top layer of potatoes. Season the top layer with the remaining  $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp. salt and some more pepper. Top with the remaining breadcrumb mixture and the final 2 Tbs. oil.

Cover the dish tightly with aluminum foil and bake for 40 minutes (be sure the aluminum foil is sealed tightly all around the baking dish, or there won't be enough steam to cook the potatoes). Uncover and continue baking until the potatoes are tender when pierced with a fork and the top is golden brown, 25 to 30 minutes longer. Let rest at least 10 minutes before serving. The tortiera is as good warm as it is hot.



bottom, following the contour of the orange. Working over a bowl to collect any juice, release the orange segments by carefully cutting them away from the membrane that separates them. Remove any seeds and put the orange segments in another bowl, separate from the juice. Squeeze the membranes over the juice bowl.

Cut the fennel in quarters lengthwise and then trim away most of the core, leaving just enough intact to keep the layers together. Slice the quarters lengthwise as thinly as you can.

With a paring knife, slice the olive flesh off the pits lengthwise. In a small bowl, whisk together the extra-virgin olive oil, lemon juice, and salt. (The recipe can be prepared up to this point several hours in advance. If working ahead, wrap and refrigerate the fennel; don't chop the mint until just before serving.)

Drain the sliced onion and toss it with the fennel. Put the fennel and onion in a shallow salad bowl or on a rimmed serving platter. Drizzle with the reserved orange juice. Arrange the orange segments on top and sprinkle with the olives and mint.

Drizzle the dressing evenly over the salad. Add several grinds of black pepper and serve immediately.



## Braised Fennel with Tomato, Green Olives & Capers

(*Finocchi alla Ghiotta*)

Serves four.

Seafood prepared *alla ghiotta* ("glutton's style")—with tomatoes, olives, and capers—is common in Calabria and Sicily, but the same flavors are compatible with fennel. Serve with grilled swordfish or tuna, roast chicken, or grilled sausages.

**1 large fennel bulb, trimmed  
( $\frac{3}{4}$  to 1 lb. after trimming;  
see directions, p. 47)**

**8 large green Sicilian or Cerignola  
olives**

**1/4 cup extra-virgin olive oil**

**1 large yellow onion, thinly sliced**

**1 1/2 tsp. kosher salt**

**1 1/2 cups peeled, seeded, and diced  
fresh tomato (2 or 3 small tomatoes)  
or a 28-oz. can whole tomatoes  
(preferably San Marzano), drained,  
seeded, and diced**

**3 Tbs. capers, drained and rinsed**

**1 1/2 Tbs. chopped fresh flat-leaf  
parsley**

Cut the fennel bulb in half lengthwise and then cut each half lengthwise into four 1 1/2-inch-thick wedges. Trim a little of the core but leave enough to hold the layers together.

With a pairing knife, slice the olive flesh off the pits lengthwise.

In a 12-inch skillet, heat the olive oil over medium-high heat. Add the fennel, one cut side down, and reduce the heat to medium. Cook, turning once with tongs, until the wedges are lightly browned on both cut sides, 2 to 3 minutes per side. Add the onion and salt. Cook, stirring occasionally and gently so as not to break up the fennel wedges, until the onions are slightly softened and browned, about 5 minutes.

Add the tomatoes, capers, and olives to the pan along with 1 cup water. Bring to a simmer, cover, and reduce the heat to medium low or low, to maintain a steady simmer. Cook until the fennel wedges are fork tender, 20 to 25 minutes. Uncover, raise the heat to high, and simmer briskly until most of the liquid evaporates, leaving a thick sauce, 3 to 5 minutes. Gently stir in the parsley. Let rest 15 minutes before serving.

## Tips for buying and storing fennel

At the market, look for large, plump, rounded bulbs. Some bulbs, depending on the variety and how they're grown, are flat and elongated. These tend to be tougher and not as sweet, so don't buy them if you don't have to. The bulb part should be largely white or pale green, with as few blemishes as possible. Fresh bulbs should look moist. If the outer layer of the bulb appears dry, tough, or discolored, the fennel has been out of the ground for a while and will not be at its freshest. The leafy dill-like fronds are another indication of freshness: they should be perky and upright, not limp.

Try to use fennel within two to three days of buying. It gradually loses moisture after harvest and becomes spongy and dry. Store it loosely wrapped in the refrigerator's crisper drawer.

Rosetta Costantino is a cooking instructor in the Bay Area, and Janet Fletcher is a food writer and cookbook author. They are writing a Calabrian cookbook, which is due out in spring 2009. ♦

# Get Your Gumbo On

A New Orleans native shows how to make two authentic versions of this classic Louisiana soup

BY POPPY TOOKER

Throughout food-obsessed South Louisiana, there is no single dish more revered and debated than gumbo. Everyone loves it, but that is where any consensus regarding the centuries-old, soupy, stewy concoction ends. What goes into gumbo, what doesn't, how to make it, even how you define gumbo is a source of constant comment. Luckily, we all agree to disagree.

As with many native New Orleanians, my earliest gumbo memories come from my great-grandmother, Maman. I can still see her smiling, trails of steam rising from the murky depths of her porcelain tureen, as she ladled her gumbo over bowls of white rice. In my life today, it is a rare week that doesn't include a gumbo, either at home or in one of the cooking classes I teach to locals and visitors alike. You could say that gumbo has been one of my life's great obsessions. And there's one thing I've learned in all that time stirring a gumbo pot: There may be few hard and fast rules in making gumbo, but understanding the basics will allow you to produce something delectable that is more than the sum of its parts.

**Roux is at the heart of the gumbo mystery,** but it's actually as simple as cooking flour and fat (see the sidebar, p. 52). The purpose of the roux is to provide flavor,



Cook your favorite—Seafood Gumbo (above and p. 54) or Chicken-Andouille Filé Gumbo (p. 55).

color, and thickening. The color of a roux determines its thickening power—darker provides less thickening but delivers a richer roasted flavor. Some cooks insist on cooking roux over low heat for 40 minutes or more, but I've found that cooking over high heat imparts full flavor and color without having to spend all that time at the stove. But you must be careful: If the roux burns (you'll know, because it gets very dark and smells acrid) it cannot be saved. You must start over.

The choice of fat for a roux says a lot about the cook. Cajuns were said to use bear grease, while Creoles favored bacon grease. I opt for vegetable oil, which is lighter and has a high smoke point, so you can make a fast but dark roux without burning.

**In addition to roux, okra and filé are possible thickeners for gumbo.** Some cooks say that filé (the powdered leaves of the sassafras tree) and okra should never be used together or that all gumbos must have okra, but these "rules" are broken over and over again. Traditionally, country cooks turned to filé for thickening because it was impossible to grow wheat in South Louisiana and they could not afford to buy flour for roux. Okra was grown in warmer months and became associated with seafood gumbo. But today, people often combine okra and filé, and that includes Leah Chase, the 85-year-old proprietor of Dooky Chase's Restaurant in New Orleans and the queen of Creole cooking, and award-winning Chef Frank Brigtzen of Brigtzen's Restaurant. I always use a roux in my gumbo and add okra or filé, too, depending on the other ingredients.

**Commonly referred to as "the holy trinity" of Creole cooking,** the celery, bell pepper, and onions added to the roux are the Creole version of the traditional French aromatic mix called mirepoix. Early European settlers brought their root vegetables to the New World, but with New Orleans under sea level, the carrot—an integral ingredient of mirepoix—was impossible to cultivate. That's how the pepper, which grows easily in South Louisiana, won a role in the traditional vegetable seasoning mix.

**Gumbo is more than just another soup;** it's a cultural touchstone for Louisiana. A bowl of gumbo is as complex and nuanced as dishes served in the fanciest restaurants. Once you've mastered the basics, you can experiment to create your own favorite meal in a bowl.

## Demystifying gumbo: the three

### Making dark roux

How long to cook roux is a question answered in as many ways as there are cooks. I've heard that roux should be cooked until it's the color of a pecan shell, a hazelnut, or a brown paper grocery bag. My personal preference is chocolate-brown.

No matter the final color, all roux starts by stirring flour into fat. It's best to start with a high proportion of fat to flour, which makes stirring the mixture easier. Once you become confident

with the roux-making process, you can use less fat if you wish.

The traditional roux-mixing tool is a flat-edged wooden spatula or spoon. So much stirring is required before the roux reaches the correct color that lumps are not an issue, and the springy action of a wire whisk could cause the molten roux to splash on the cook, resulting in a serious burn. Today, heatproof silicone spatulas are a wonderful alternative to the old-fashioned wooden spoon.



**1** Stir flour into heated oil to combine.



**2** Continue to stir constantly over medium-high heat until the roux turns a caramel color, about 5 minutes.



**3** Add the onion and keep stirring over medium-high heat until the roux turns a chocolate-brown, 1 to 3 minutes more.

# essentials to fantastic flavor

## Okra vs. filé

Both okra and filé help thicken gumbo and give it a stew-like heartiness.

Okra is a green pod, which is sliced into rounds that break down after being cooked. Some people claim an aversion to okra because of its texture, but I find that frying it hot and fast before adding it to the gumbo keeps it from getting slimy.

Filé (pronounced FEE-lay) powder is the ground, dried leaves of the sassafras tree. It smells like eucalyptus and lends an earthy flavor to gumbo. Filé must never be added to boiling gumbo, or it will turn stringy.

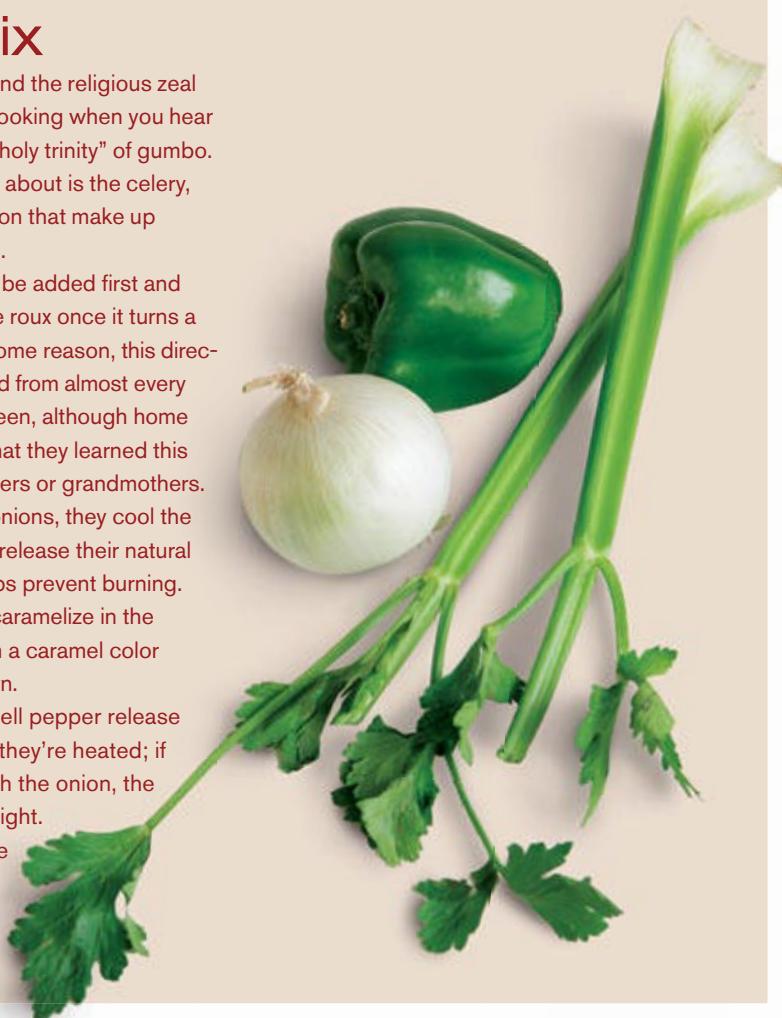


## Creole mirepoix

It's easy to understand the religious zeal brought to Creole cooking when you hear people refer to "the holy trinity" of gumbo. What they're talking about is the celery, bell pepper, and onion that make up gumbo's flavor base.

The onions must be added first and by themselves to the roux once it turns a caramel color. For some reason, this direction has been omitted from almost every gumbo recipe I've seen, although home cooks will confide that they learned this step from their mothers or grandmothers. When you add the onions, they cool the roux slightly as they release their natural sugars, and this helps prevent burning. Those sugars then caramelize in the roux, bringing it from a caramel color to a chocolate-brown.

The celery and bell pepper release a lot of water when they're heated; if you added them with the onion, the roux would get too light. They're added at the end, when the roux is as dark as you want it to be.



## Gumbo roots

To get to the essence of gumbo, you have to understand the early settlers who stirred the first cauldrons of this soup. The first Creoles were the offspring of French and Spanish settlers in New Orleans who brought with them their refined cooking techniques and ingredients. Their dishes were almost immediately adopted and transformed by the African slaves who cooked at the city's open hearths.

The Cajuns, on the other hand, also had European roots but came to Louisiana from eastern Canada and settled in the swamps and prairie lands of Louisiana. Surviving on what they could grow, hunt, or trap, they adapted their traditional cooking to the new ingredients they found in southwest Louisiana. The gumbos of the Creoles and Cajuns differed as much as the people who cooked them yet inevitably intersected in the 20th century as travel increased between the country and the city.

At its simplest, Seafood Gumbo with okra and tomatoes is the gumbo of the city (New Orleans), and Chicken-Andouille Filé Gumbo is Cajun country gumbo. But once you're sure you've solved the gumbo puzzle, you taste another delicious version from an old family's or a respected chef's gumbo pot, and the rules are contradicted yet again.

Even the origins of the word "gumbo" are debated. The African word for okra in the Bantu tongue is "kingombo." The Choctaws sold filé, or finely ground, dried sassafras leaves, which they called "kombo," at the French Market in New Orleans. So does gumbo get its name from the okra or the filé? That's just another gumbo mystery.



## Poppy Tooker's Seafood Gumbo

*Yields about 3 quarts; serves six to eight.*

If you can, buy fresh shrimp with the shells and heads intact. If not, just the shells can be used to make the stock.

- 1½ lb. medium shrimp (41 to 50 or 51 to 60 per lb.) or 2 lb. if using head-on shrimp**
- 2 cups chopped white onion (about 1 large onion; reserve the skin)**
- 1 cup chopped celery (about 2 medium stalks; reserve the trimmings)**
- ¼ cup plus 6 Tbs. vegetable oil**
- 1 lb. fresh or thawed frozen okra, sliced ¼ inch thick (about 4 cups)**
- ½ cup all-purpose flour**
- 1 cup chopped green bell pepper (about 1 medium pepper)**
- 1 cup canned crushed tomatoes**
- ½ lb. fresh or pasteurized lump crabmeat (about 1½ cups), picked over for shells, or 4 to 6 gumbo crabs (about 1 lb. total), thawed (see note at right)**
- 1 Tbs. dried thyme**
- 1 bay leaf**
- 2 tsp. kosher salt; more to taste**
- 1 tsp. freshly ground black pepper; more to taste**
- 1 cup fresh shucked oysters (halved if large)**

**½ cup thinly sliced scallions (about 8)**

**Louisiana-style hot sauce, to taste  
(see From Our Test Kitchen, p. 70)**

**¼ cup hot cooked white rice per serving**

**Make the shrimp stock:** Remove the shrimp heads, if necessary. Peel and devein the shrimp and refrigerate the shrimp until needed. Combine the shrimp peels and heads and the reserved onion skin and celery trimmings in a 6- to 8-quart pot. Cover with 9 cups of cold water and bring to a boil over high heat. Reduce the heat to a vigorous simmer and cook, uncovered, for 10 minutes. Strain and reserve. You should have about 2 quarts.

**Prepare the okra:** In a 10-inch straight-sided sauté pan, heat ¼ cup of the vegetable oil over medium-high heat until hot. Fry the okra in two batches until it becomes lightly browned on the edges, 3 to 5 minutes per batch (fry undisturbed for the first minute or two until browning begins and then stir once or twice to flip most pieces and brown evenly). With a slotted spoon, transfer each batch of okra to a plate or platter lined with a paper towel.

**Make the roux:** Heat the remaining 6 Tbs. oil over medium-high heat in a 6-quart Dutch oven. Once it's hot, add the flour and stir constantly with a wooden spoon or heatproof

spatula until the roux reaches the color of caramel, about 5 minutes. Add the onion and stir until the roux deepens to a chocolate-brown, 1 to 3 minutes. Add the celery and bell pepper and cook, stirring frequently, until slightly softened, about 5 minutes. Add the shrimp stock, okra, tomatoes, gumbo crabs (if using), thyme, bay leaf, salt, and pepper. Adjust the heat to medium low or low and simmer uncovered, stirring occasionally, for 45 minutes.

**Serve the gumbo:** Five minutes before serving, add the shrimp, fresh or pasteurized lump crabmeat (if using), oysters, and scallions. Add hot sauce, salt, and pepper to taste. Serve in large soup bowls over ¼ cup cooked rice per serving. Pass additional hot sauce at the table.

**NOTE:** Gumbo crabs are small blue crabs that have been cleaned and halved or quartered. They are served in the shell, and you pick out the meat as you eat the gumbo. They're available frozen, usually in 1-pound packages. Ask your fishmonger to get you some if you can't find them in your grocery. Fresh or pasteurized lump crabmeat is a reasonable alternative. Do not use shredded or imitation crabmeat.

## Chicken-Andouille Filé Gumbo

*Yields about 4 quarts; serves eight to ten.*

**1 lb. andouille sausage or other spicy smoked pork sausage, sliced in half lengthwise, then cut into  $\frac{1}{3}$ -inch-thick half-moon slices**  
 **$\frac{1}{2}$  cup vegetable oil**  
**One 3- to 4-lb. chicken, cut into 8 pieces**  
**Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper**  
**1 cup all-purpose flour**  
**1 large white onion, coarsely chopped**  
**3 stalks celery, coarsely chopped**  
**1 cup chopped green bell pepper**  
**3 cloves garlic, minced**  
**2 quarts low-salt chicken broth**  
**2 bay leaves**  
**2 tsp. dried thyme**  
**1 bunch scallions, thinly sliced (dark- and light-green parts only)**  
**Louisiana-style hot sauce, to taste (see From Our Test Kitchen, p. 70)**  
 **$\frac{1}{4}$  cup hot cooked white rice per serving**  
 **$\frac{1}{2}$  to 1 tsp. filé powder per serving**

**Prepare the sausage and chicken:** Heat a heavy-duty 12-inch skillet over medium-high heat until hot, 1 to 2 minutes. Add the andouille and cook, stirring occasionally with a wooden spoon, until well browned, 4 to 6 minutes. Transfer to a large bowl. Add  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup water to the skillet and immediately scrape the bottom with a wooden spoon to release any cooked-on bits. Reserve this liquid.

Heat the oil in a 7- to 8-quart Dutch oven over medium-high heat. Season the chicken pieces with salt and pepper and sauté the chicken in two batches until golden brown on both sides, 3 to 4 minutes per side. Transfer to the bowl with the sausage.

**Make the roux:** Add the flour to the oil remaining in the Dutch oven and stir constantly with a wooden spoon or heatproof spatula over medium-high heat until the roux reaches the color of caramel, 4 to 8 minutes. Add the onion and stir until the roux deepens to a chocolate-brown, 1 to 3 minutes. Add the celery, bell pepper, and garlic and cook, stirring frequently, until slightly softened, 3 to 4 minutes. Stir in the chicken broth, 1 quart of water, the liquid reserved from the sausage pan, and the sausage, chicken, bay leaves, and thyme.

Bring to a boil and then reduce the heat and simmer uncovered until the chicken is falling off the bone, about 45 minutes. Trans-



fer the chicken to a plate. If you like, skim the fat from the surface of the gumbo with a large shallow spoon.

When the chicken is cool enough to handle, discard the skin and bones, pull the chicken meat into bite-size pieces, and return the meat to the gumbo. Season to taste with salt and pepper if necessary (you may find that the sausage and broth provided enough seasoning).

**Serve the gumbo:** Five minutes before serving, add the scallions and hot sauce to taste. Serve in large soup bowls over  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup cooked rice per serving. Sprinkle  $\frac{1}{2}$  to 1 tsp. of the filé powder on top of each bowl of gumbo and stir to thicken, or pass the filé at the table for everyone to add to taste.

**NOTE:** Do not add filé powder to the entire pot of gumbo. If gumbo is reheated with filé powder in it, the filé will become stringy and unpleasant.

## Make ahead

Store gumbo in the refrigerator for up to three days and then reheat gently before serving. As with many stews and braises, gumbo tastes better the second day. You can also freeze it for up to eight months. Simply transfer to freezer-safe containers.

Poppy Tooker is a native New Orleanian who has taught classes in traditional Louisiana cuisine for 25 years. ♦



# A Passage to India

Spice up a casual, comforting menu of roasted chicken, spinach, and rice with the enticing flavors of India

BY MELISSA CLARK

**Toasted Spiced Cashews****Indian-Spiced Chicken  
with Lime & Cilantro****Basmati Rice Pilaf  
with Pistachios****Spinach with Yogurt  
& Chickpeas****Mango Lassi Parfait**

**F**riday is my favorite night for hosting dinner parties. Without the high expectations of Saturday (when everyone knows you had all day to cook), or the back-to-work pall that hangs over Sunday, a Friday night gathering reflects an end-of-the-week festivity that is by nature casual and relaxed.

The key to Friday night entertaining is to let its inherent limitations (that you got home from work at 6 p.m., and your friends are coming over at 8 p.m.) be your

inspiration. Knowing that I have only about two hours to cook dinner keeps me from even contemplating homemade pasta or shimmering fruit tarts. Instead, I stick to extremely flavorful, easy dishes that are impressive enough to serve to guests but don't require a huge amount of effort.

For example, in this menu, I use some intense Indian flavors to enliven what's at heart just a comforting, laid-back meal of chicken, spinach, and rice. Even people who think they don't like Indian food will like

this. The chicken marinates in spices that give the meat an earthy, rich flavor that I brighten with a little lime and cilantro. (The chicken needs to marinate only as long as it takes the broiler to heat, but if you'd rather, you can prep the chicken the day before and marinate it in the refrigerator overnight.)

Staying with my Indian theme, I pair the chicken with a simple pistachio-studded basmati rice pilaf and a creamy purée of spinach and yogurt with chickpeas, a variation of an Indian dish called saag.

Since I know I'll still be finishing up the meal's preparation when guests arrive, I distract them with drinks and snacks: spiced, toasted cashews and crisp fennel slices, which contrast nicely with the salty, addictive nuts. I love the bright surprise the fennel offers, but you could serve cherry or grape tomatoes or even crunchy slices of English cucumber sprinkled with sea salt, which have the same refreshing qualities as the fennel for even less work.

Finally, for dessert, a mango parfait is a quick but elegant twist on an Indian beverage called a lassi. And since you can make the parfait components ahead, and assembling it at the last minute is a snap, you won't have to worry about doing anything much after you sit down to dinner. Just relax and enjoy the meal.

## Getting it all done

### Up to a day ahead:

Do all your shopping.

Marinate the chicken.

Prepare the Toasted Spiced Cashews.

While the oven is hot, toast the pistachios for the parfait and the pilaf.

Set the table.

Thaw the spinach in the refrigerator.

### 1½ hours before guests arrive:

Do all your chopping: Peel and cube the mangoes; then chop, in this order, the pistachios, scallions, ginger, onions, and garlic and transfer each to separate prep bowls.

Cut the lime wedges.

Make the cardamom syrup for the Mango Lassi Parfait.

Put the cashews in a serving bowl.

Open the wine and set up your bar.

### 45 minutes before guests arrive:

If you marinated the chicken ahead, remove it from the refrigerator so it's not refrigerator-cold when you start to cook it.

Add the mango cubes to the cooled cardamom syrup.

Whip the cream and the yogurt for the Mango Lassi Parfaits, cover, and refrigerate until serving time.

Prepare the pilaf. Keep covered off the heat and reheat over low if necessary.

Prepare the Spinach with Yogurt & Chickpeas through the purée step and cover to keep warm. When ready to serve, add the chickpeas and reheat over low.

### As your guests arrive:

Offer your guests drinks, cashews, and any other nibbles you've prepared.

Broil the chicken.

### Once your guests are all there and have had a drink:

Arrange the chicken and its garnishes on a serving platter.

Spoon the rice into a large bowl.

Spoon the spinach into a serving bowl.

### After dinner:

Layer the mango and cream in parfait glasses and serve.



## Toasted Spiced Cashews

Yields 4 cups.

This recipe uses garam masala, an Indian spice blend (see the sidebar below). It's available in many supermarkets, or you can mail-order it (for sources, see p. 80). You can make the cashews a day ahead.

**4 cups unsalted cashews (about 1¼ lb.)**

**1 large egg white, beaten slightly**

**¼ cup granulated sugar**

**4 tsp. garam masala**

**1½ tsp. kosher salt**

**½ to 1 tsp. cayenne pepper**

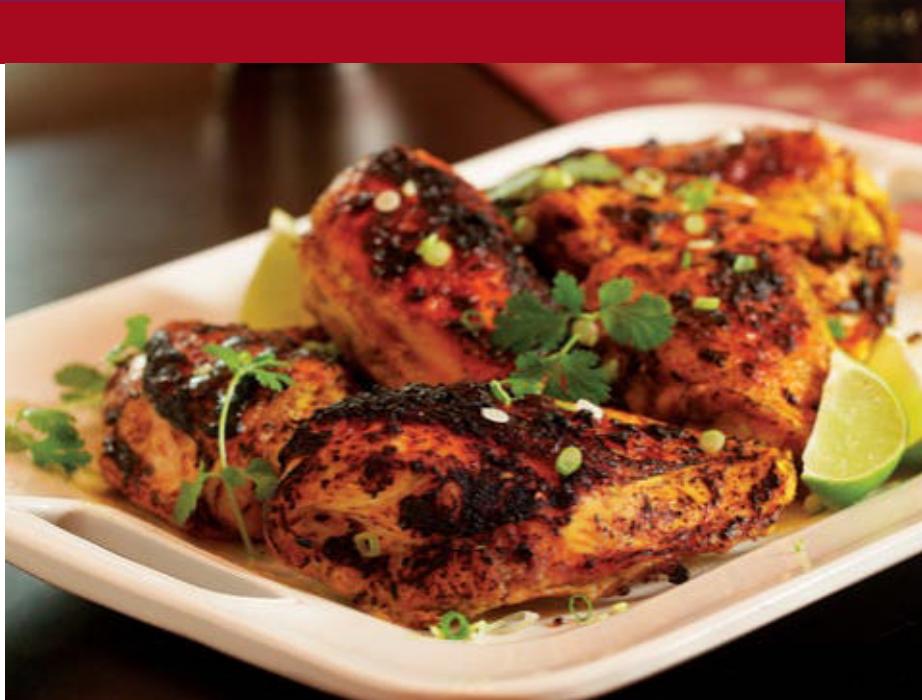
Position a rack in the center of the oven and heat the oven to 325°F.

In a large bowl, toss the cashews with the egg white, coating the nuts evenly. Add the sugar, garam masala, salt, and cayenne. Toss again to combine.

Line a large rimmed baking sheet with parchment. Spread the nuts on the baking sheet and roast, stirring every 5 to 10 minutes and breaking up clumps if they form, until nicely browned, 25 to 35 minutes. Break up any clumps again while the nuts are still warm. When the nuts have cooled, put them in a serving bowl, and cover if making ahead.

## What is garam masala?

Garam masala is a fragrant mix of toasted, ground spices that in India varies from cook to cook. It seems that there are infinite variations, many of which contain cinnamon, cumin, cloves, nutmeg, mace, coriander, cardamom, and black pepper. Traditionally, garam masala is made at home from scratch, but these days, you can buy it in the spice section of well-stocked supermarkets.



## Indian-Spiced Chicken with Lime & Cilantro

Serves six.

If you can't find fenugreek seeds in your supermarket, you can mail-order them (for sources, see p. 80).

**1 Tbs. coriander seed**  
**1 Tbs. cumin seed**  
**½ tsp. whole black peppercorns**  
**½ tsp. fenugreek seeds**  
**½ cup fresh cilantro leaves and tender stems, plus additional leaves for garnish**  
**Freshly squeezed juice of 1 medium lime (about ¼ cup)**  
**2 medium cloves garlic, peeled**  
**2 scallions (white and green parts), 1 cut into 1-inch lengths, 1 thinly sliced for garnish**  
**1½ Tbs. canola oil**  
**1¼ tsp. kosher salt; more to taste**  
**1 tsp. ground turmeric**  
**6 small (¾ lb.) skin-on, bone-in chicken breasts or 12 medium (6 oz.) thighs (or a combination), trimmed of excess skin and fat**  
**Lime wedges for garnish**

In a small, dry skillet over medium-low heat, toast the coriander and cumin, shaking the pan or stirring frequently, until the cumin seeds darken and become very fragrant, about 5 minutes. Transfer to a spice grinder or mortar and pestle, add the peppercorns and fenugreek, and grind to a fine powder.

Combine the cilantro, lime juice, garlic, 1-inch scallion pieces, canola oil, salt,

turmeric, and ground spice mixture in a blender or food processor; blend into a smooth purée.

Put the chicken pieces in a large bowl, add the marinade, and turn to coat the pieces all over with the marinade. Set aside while you heat the broiler; or cover and refrigerate for up to 24 hours.

Position an oven rack about 8 inches from the broiler element; heat the broiler on high. Line a large rimmed baking sheet with foil. Arrange the chicken pieces, skin side up, on the baking sheet. If using a combination of parts, put the breast pieces on one end of the baking sheet and the thighs on the other end. Sprinkle generously with salt.

When the broiler is hot, broil until the chicken skin is brown and crisp all over, with some singed bits, about 20 minutes, rotating the pan occasionally for even browning. Check the chicken for doneness, either by cutting into pieces to see if they're cooked through or by using an instant-read thermometer—breasts should be 165°F, thighs should be 170°F. If some or all of the chicken is still underdone by the time the skin is well browned, turn off the broiler and set the oven temperature at 450°F. Continue roasting the chicken, checking every 5 minutes, until cooked through, 5 to 15 minutes more. If some pieces finish earlier than others, transfer them to a platter and keep warm while you continue to roast the underdone pieces.

Arrange all of the chicken on a serving platter and garnish with the cilantro leaves, sliced scallion, and lime wedges.

## Basmati Rice Pilaf with Pistachios

*Yields about 6 cups; serves six to eight.*

For more information on cardamom pods, see From Our Test Kitchen, p. 70.

**⅔ cup shelled pistachios**  
**2 Tbs. canola oil**  
**1 small yellow onion, finely diced (about 1 cup)**  
**½ tsp. kosher salt; more to taste**  
**½ Tbs. coriander seeds, lightly smashed**  
**12 whole green cardamom pods**  
**3-inch piece cinnamon stick**  
**1 bay leaf**  
**2 cups basmati rice, rinsed**  
**2¾ cups low-salt chicken broth**

Position a rack in the center of the oven and heat the oven to 325°F. Spread the pistachios on a baking sheet and toast in the oven until golden and fragrant, 7 to 10 minutes. Transfer the baking sheet to a wire rack to cool.

Roughly chop the nuts and set aside.

Heat the oil in a medium saucepan over medium-high heat. Add the onion and salt, and sauté for 2 minutes; add the coriander, cardamom, cinnamon, and bay leaf to the pan and continue to cook, stirring occasionally, until the onion is softened and turning brown, 1 to 3 minutes more. Add the rice and cook, stirring, until the rice is well coated with oil and slightly translucent, about 3 minutes.

Add the chicken broth. Bring to a boil and then reduce the heat to low, cover, and let simmer until the liquid is absorbed and the rice is tender, about 15 minutes. Discard the cinnamon stick, bay leaf, and cardamom pods.

Season to taste with salt if necessary.

When ready to serve, sprinkle with the chopped pistachios.



## Spinach with Yogurt & Chickpeas

*Yields about 3 cups; serves six.*

Part side dish, part sauce, this puréed spinach is my take on the Indian dish called saag.

**2 Tbs. unsalted butter**  
**1 small yellow onion, medium diced (about 1 cup)**  
**3 large cloves garlic, chopped (1½ Tbs.)**  
**1 Tbs. minced fresh ginger**  
**1 tsp. garam masala**  
**½ tsp. ground coriander**  
**Two 10-oz. boxes frozen whole-leaf spinach, thawed**  
**½ tsp. kosher salt; more to taste**  
**Freshly ground black pepper**  
**¾ cup plain whole-milk Greek yogurt or regular whole-milk yogurt, strained (for more, see From Our Test Kitchen, p. 70)**  
**1 cup canned chickpeas, drained and rinsed**

Heat the butter in a large (preferably 12-inch) skillet over medium-high heat. Add the onion and sauté until soft and lightly browned, about 3 minutes. Add the garlic, ginger, garam masala, and coriander and cook very briefly, stirring constantly and taking care not to let the spices scorch or the garlic get the least bit browned, 15 to 30 seconds. Add the spinach and ½ cup water. Cook, stirring, until well mixed and heated through, 2 to 3 minutes. Remove from the heat and season with the salt and pepper to taste.

Transfer the contents of the skillet to a food processor, add the yogurt, and purée. (The dish may be made to this point up to 2 hours ahead.) Return to the skillet and stir in the chickpeas. Set over medium heat, stirring occasionally, until hot. The spinach should be moist and even a bit saucy, so add water if necessary. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Keep hot until ready to serve.



## Mango Lassi Parfait

*Serves six.*

A lassi is a refreshing Indian yogurt drink—something like a smoothie—that often includes fruit, mango being especially popular. This parfait tastes like a lassi but has a more festive presentation.

**1 cup granulated sugar**  
**3 Tbs. green cardamom pods**  
**2 ripe mangos, peeled, pitted, and cut into ¾-inch cubes (to yield about 3 cups)**  
**1 cup whipping cream**  
**1 Tbs. confectioners' sugar**  
**1 cup whole-milk Greek yogurt or regular whole-milk yogurt, strained (for more, see From Our Test Kitchen, p. 70)**  
**½ cup toasted pistachios, coarsely chopped (see the Basmati Rice Pilaf recipe, p. 59, for toasting instructions)**

## Wine picks

The Toasted Spiced Cashews call for a light, fruity wine with crisp acidity; Moscato d'Asti, with its gentle bubbles and vibrant fruit, would be a perfect match. Try the 2006 Michele Chiarlo (\$16) or the 2006 Bruno Ceretto "Santo Stefano" (\$18). Pair the Indian-Spiced Chicken with Lime & Cilantro with a slightly sweet Riesling with high acidity and no oak; the 2005 Mönchhof Estate Riesling (\$14) or the 2005 Gunderloch Riesling Kabinett Jean-Baptiste (\$18), both from Germany, are simply delicious. Finally, with the Mango Lassi Parfait, try the 2005 Bonny Doon Muscat Vin de Glacière (\$16).

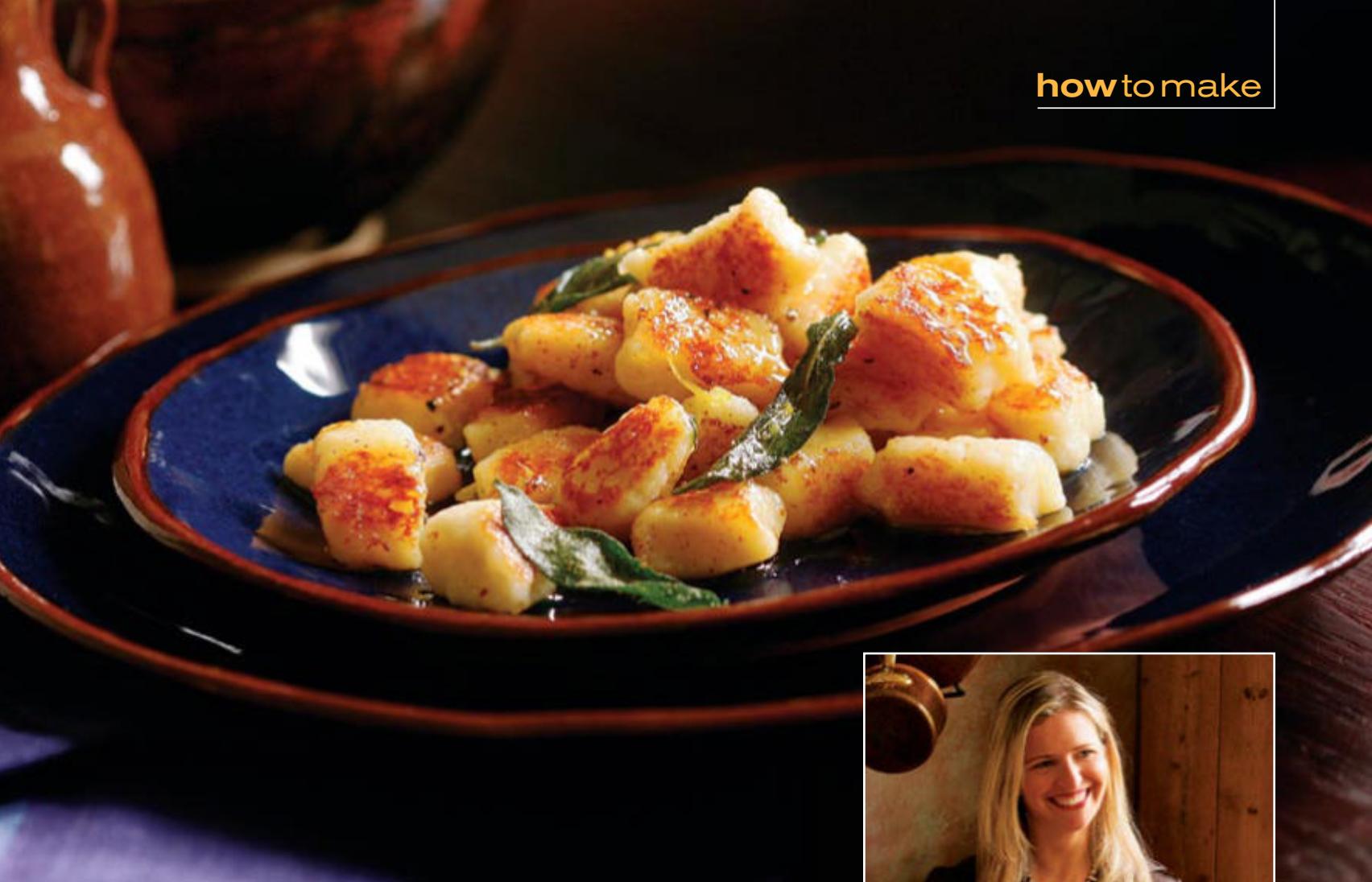
—Tim Gaiser, contributing editor

In a small saucepan, combine the granulated sugar with 1 cup water and the cardamom pods and bring to a boil over medium-high heat. Reduce the heat to a simmer. Stir until the sugar dissolves and then continue to simmer until syrupy and slightly thickened, about 8 minutes. Remove from the heat and let the syrup cool to about room temperature. Strain the syrup into a bowl and add the mango. Marinate in the refrigerator for at least 20 minutes and up to 4 hours.

With an electric mixer, whip the cream and confectioners' sugar to soft peaks. Put the yogurt in a medium bowl and whip lightly with a hand whisk. Fold a spoonful of the whipped cream into the yogurt to lighten it. Fold in the remaining whipped cream. Whisk in 2 Tbs. of the mango-cardamom syrup (just the syrup, no mango cubes).

Using a slotted spoon, divide about half of the mango cubes among six parfait glasses. Divide half the yogurt mixture among the glasses, layering it on top of the mango. Drizzle about 1 tsp. of the mango-cardamom syrup into each glass. Repeat the layering with the remaining mango and yogurt. Finish with another drizzle of syrup, sprinkle with the pistachios, and serve.

*Melissa Clark is a food writer and the author of 18 cookbooks; her latest is Chef Interrupted: Delicious Chefs' Recipes That You Can Actually Make at Home. ♦*



# The Secrets to Soft, Fluffy Gnocchi

For gnocchi with a delicate, melt-in-your-mouth texture, choose the right kind of potatoes and add just enough flour

BY LAURA GIANNATEMPO

**W**hen I lived in Torino I spent a good amount of time each winter in the Alps. For years, my parents have owned a cozy vacation home in the village of Oulx, where the butcher still does his own slaughtering, and herds of cows amble down from high pastures in early fall (you can see them go by our kitchen window). But unlike most of my friends, I didn't do much skiing or hiking in the cold season. I preferred to help my mother prepare warming dinners in the *tavernetta*, the

snug, comfy wood-paneled family room next to the wine cellar.

In the *tavernetta's* rustic kitchen we made robust winter braises like *brasato al Barolo* (beef braised in Barolo wine), creamy polenta with fontina and *Gorgonzola*, and my mom's famously soft, pillow-y gnocchi (pronounced NYOH-kee) tossed in a rich sausage ragù. They were so ethereal they almost melted in your mouth, leaving nothing but pure potato flavor. Guests always clamored for her gnocchi when they came for dinner.

So I could barely hide my disappointment when I first ordered gnocchi at an American restaurant. They were tough and chewy, hard to eat after the first few bites. And the gnocchi you buy in stores, I soon discovered, suffer from the same unappealing texture. If this was what Americans thought of gnocchi, I realized, they must be wondering what all the fuss is about.

### The keys to delicate gnocchi

Good gnocchi, which are essentially light potato dumplings, shouldn't be tough or chewy at all; they should be soft and delicate, with a silky-smooth texture—just like my mother's. It's easy enough to make gnocchi like this at home: All you need is potatoes, flour, eggs, and a little salt. But you do have to pay attention to a few key points in the process to achieve the right texture.

**First, use russet potatoes.** They're dry and fluffy and produce the lightest gnocchi. I also find that it's best to use a ricer instead of a masher to crush the cooked potatoes, because it keeps them aerated and soft. Never use a blender or a food processor, or the potatoes will turn into glop.

**Add just enough flour to hold the dough together, and don't overmix.** The culprit in tough gnocchi is usually one of two things (or both): too much flour in the dough or too much kneading. In the years of making gnocchi with my mother, I've learned exactly how much flour I need to add, although I had to adapt the recipe here to American flour and potatoes, both of which are slightly different from what you find in Italy. I've also learned that the dough should be kneaded just until the flour is fully incorporated, not a moment longer; otherwise the flour's gluten will make the gnocchi tough.

**Finally, I like to toss gnocchi with a rich, hearty sauce.** The ones here are a match made in heaven for homemade gnocchi, and they're surprisingly easy to prepare. There's a variation of my mother's simple ragù with sausage and leeks, perfumed with lots of fresh herbs; a melty, creamy Gorgonzola sauce that comes together in minutes; and a brown butter and sage sauce that I pair with pan-seared gnocchi for a little variety.

Though I admit I've since eaten delicious gnocchi at a handful of good Italian restaurants known for their authenticity, I'd still rather make them at home. It's not hard, and I know I won't be disappointed.

# Making light, delicate gnocchi

## Potato Gnocchi

Serves six.

**2 lb. russet potatoes (about 4 medium), scrubbed  
6¾ oz. (1½ cups) unbleached all-purpose flour, more for kneading and rolling  
1 tsp. kosher salt  
1 large egg, lightly beaten**

Put the unpeeled potatoes in a large pot. Fill the pot with enough cold water to cover the potatoes by at least 2 inches and bring to a simmer over medium-high heat. Reduce the heat to medium, partially cover the pot, and simmer the potatoes until they are completely tender and easily pierced with a skewer, 30 to 35 minutes.

Drain the potatoes, let them cool just enough that you can handle them, and then peel them. Cut them in half crosswise and pass them through a ricer into a large bowl. Let cool until almost at room temperature, at least 20 minutes.

Lightly flour a work surface. In a small bowl, mix the flour with the salt. Add the egg to the potatoes and then add the flour mixture. **1** Mix with your hands until the flour is moistened and the dough starts to clump together; the dough will still be a bit crumbly at this point. Gather the dough together and press it against the bottom of the bowl until you have a uniform mass. Transfer it to the floured surface and wash your hands.

**2** Knead gently until the flour is fully incorporated and the dough is soft, smooth, and a little sticky, 30 seconds to 1 minute. (Don't overmix it, or the gnocchi will be tough; the dough should feel very delicate.) Move the dough to one side, making sure the surface underneath it is well floured. Cover it with a clean kitchen towel.

Cover two large rimmed baking sheets with parchment and sprinkle lightly with flour.

Remove any lingering bits of dough from your work surface and lightly re-flour the surface. **3** Tear off a piece of dough about the size of a large lemon and put the towel back on the rest of the dough so it doesn't dry out.

**4** With the palms of both hands, roll the dough piece on the floured surface into a rope about ¾ inch in diameter.

**5** With a sharp knife or a bench knife, cut the rope crosswise every ¾ inch to make roughly ¾-inch-square gnocchi. Arrange the gnocchi in a single layer on the parchment-covered baking sheets, making sure they don't touch. Repeat until you run out of dough, re-flouring the work surface as needed. When all the gnocchi have been cut and spread out on the baking sheets, sprinkle them with a little more flour.

If you're going to use the gnocchi within 2 to 3 hours, they can sit out on the counter. For longer storage, see the sidebar at far right.

## Saucing and serving gnocchi

Gnocchi's plump, pillowy texture and mild, delicate flavor make them perfect for rich, hearty sauces like the ones on pp. 64–65. In general, meat sauces are a fantastic match, but butter and cream-based sauces work well, too.

In Italy, gnocchi are usually served after appetizers (*antipasti*) as a first course (or *primo piatto*), instead of

pasta. And they're followed by a meat and vegetable course (*secondo piatto* and *contorno*). When Italians eat gnocchi this way, the portions tend to be on the small side. However, gnocchi can just as easily be served as a main course, preceded or followed by a light green salad. (The servings here are for gnocchi served as a main course.)

# is easier than you'd think



**2** You want the final dough to be soft, smooth, and a little sticky. For gnocchi with a fluffy texture, don't knead the dough past the point where the flour is fully incorporated into the potatoes.



**3** Think large lemon size when you tear off a piece of dough to roll out.



**4** Move the palms of your hands back and forth to roll the torn-off portion into a long rope.



## Save time: skip the fork

Classic Italian homemade gnocchi are pressed on a fork to curl them and impart the traditional ridges. To save time, I just cut them in small squares and leave them as cute little pillows. I think they look prettier, and they're a lot less fussy to make.

**1** The gnocchi dough will still be a bit crumbly when you first mix the potatoes with the flour and eggs.

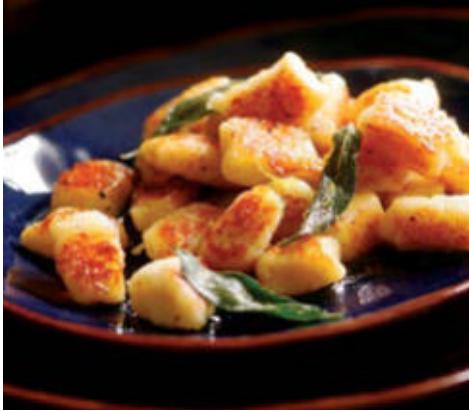
## Make ahead and freeze

You can serve freshly made gnocchi right away or within a couple of hours, or you can freeze them for later use. Put the gnocchi in the freezer while they're still on the baking sheets and freeze until they are hard to the touch, at least one hour. Transfer them to a large zip-top bag or several smaller bags and freeze for up to two months.

Cook frozen gnocchi in boiling water in two batches. Frozen gnocchi cause the temperature of the cooking water to drop, so they'll fall apart before the water returns to a boil if there are too many in the pot.

Don't refrigerate fresh gnocchi for more than two or three hours, as they tend to ooze water and become soggy.

**5** When you cut the rope into small square gnocchi, try to make them as uniform as possible.



## Pan-Seared Gnocchi with Browned Butter & Sage

Serves six.

FOR THE GNOCCHI:

- ¾ tsp. kosher salt; more as needed**
- 1 recipe Potato Gnocchi (see p. 62)**
- 3 Tbs. unsalted butter, cut into 3 even pieces**

FOR THE SAUCE:

- 8 Tbs. unsalted butter, cut into 1-inch cubes**
- 18 large fresh sage leaves**
- 1 tsp. finely grated lemon zest**
- Kosher salt**
- Freshly ground black pepper**

**Cook the gnocchi:** Bring a large pot of well-salted water to a boil over high heat. Add about one-third of the gnocchi. To get the gnocchi into the boiling water, fold the parchment ends to form a chute and gently shake the gnocchi out, taking care not to clump them together as you drop them in. Give one gentle stir, wait until the gnocchi all float to the surface of the water, and then cook them for 1 minute.

Meanwhile, heat 1 Tbs. of the butter in a 12-inch nonstick skillet over medium-high heat. When the butter is completely melted, use a large slotted spoon or a strainer to transfer the cooked gnocchi from the boiling water to the skillet, shaking off as much water as possible first. The gnocchi should form a single layer in the skillet. (If the butter is melted before the gnocchi cook, take it off the heat; if the gnocchi cook before the butter is fully melted, it's fine to add the gnocchi.) Sprinkle with ¼ tsp. salt and cook, shaking the pan occasionally to turn the gnocchi, until they're lightly browned, about 2 minutes. Transfer to a large plate. Repeat with the remaining gnocchi.

**Make the sauce:** Wipe the skillet clean if necessary. Put it over medium-high heat and add the butter. When the butter has almost completely melted, stir in the sage leaves. Cook, stirring occasionally, until the butter turns a light brown color (be careful not to let it burn) and the sage leaves darken and crisp up slightly, 2 to 3 minutes. Remove from the heat.

Add the reserved gnocchi and the lemon zest to the pan and toss to coat well. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Serve immediately.



## Gnocchi with Creamy Gorgonzola Sauce

Yields 2 scant cups sauce; serves six.

**Kosher salt**

FOR THE SAUCE:

- 1½ cups heavy cream**
- ½ lb. Gorgonzola dolce (soft Gorgonzola), rind removed and cheese cut into 1-inch dice, at room temperature**
- 1½ tsp. all-purpose flour**

FOR THE GNOCCHI:

- 1 recipe Potato Gnocchi (see p. 62)**
- ½ cup chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley (optional)**

Bring a large pot of well-salted water to a boil over high heat.

**Make the sauce:** Heat the heavy cream in a 12-inch skillet over medium-high heat until small bubbles begin to

form in the middle and on the sides, 1 to 2 minutes. Add the Gorgonzola and cook, stirring, until it's completely melted, about 2 minutes. Reduce the heat to medium and whisk in the flour. Cook, stirring, until the sauce is slightly thickened, about 3 minutes more. Turn off the heat and cover to keep warm.

**Cook the gnocchi and toss with the sauce:** To get the gnocchi into the boiling water, fold the parchment ends to form a chute and gently shake the gnocchi out, taking care not to clump them together as you drop them in. Give one gentle stir, wait until the gnocchi all float to the surface of the water, and then cook them for 1 minute. Carefully drain the gnocchi in a colander. Transfer them to the sauce and gently toss to coat. Serve immediately, topped with the parsley, if using.

## Gnocchi with Sausage & Leek Ragù

Yields about 3 cups ragù; serves six.

You can make this sauce ahead and refrigerate it, covered, for up to 5 days or freeze it for up to 1 month.

### FOR THE SAUCE:

- 28-oz. can whole peeled tomatoes (preferably San Marzano)
- ½ lb. sweet Italian sausage (about 2 links)
- 3 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 large leek (white and light-green parts only), trimmed, halved lengthwise, rinsed well, and cut crosswise into thin half-moon slices (about 1½ cups)
- 2 tsp. chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley
- 1 tsp. chopped fresh thyme
- 1 tsp. chopped fresh marjoram
- 1 tsp. minced garlic (about 1 medium clove)
- ½ tsp. kosher salt; more to taste
- Freshly ground black pepper

### FOR THE GNOCCHI:

- Kosher salt
- 1 recipe Potato Gnocchi (see p. 62)
- 1 cup freshly grated Parmigiano-Reggiano (optional)

**Make the sauce:** Put the tomatoes and their juices in a food processor and pulse 4 or 5 times until the tomatoes are crushed but not completely puréed.

Remove the sausage from its casing and tear the sausage apart with your hands into coarse pieces. Heat 1 Tbs. of the olive oil in a 12-inch skillet over medium-high heat. Add the sausage and cook, further breaking it apart with a wooden spoon, until lightly browned and almost completely cooked through, 3 to 5 minutes. With a slotted spoon, transfer the sausage to a plate.

Add the remaining 2 Tbs. olive oil to the pan and then add the leek, parsley, thyme, marjoram, garlic, and salt. Cook, stirring, until the leek is soft and fragrant, about 3 minutes. Adjust the heat if the garlic or leek shows any sign of burning.

Add the tomatoes and reserved sausage and stir well to combine, scraping up any browned bits on the bottom of the pan. Bring to a vigorous simmer and then reduce the heat to medium low. Cover the pan with the lid slightly ajar and simmer gently for 45 minutes. If the sauce is bubbling too fast, reduce the heat to low. Remove the lid and if the sauce seems watery, continue to simmer, stirring occasion-



ally, until reduced to a thick sauce consistency. Adjust the seasoning to taste with salt and pepper.

**Cook the gnocchi and toss with the sauce:** Bring a large pot of well-salted water to a boil over high heat. To get the gnocchi into the boiling water, fold the parchment ends to form a chute and gently shake the gnocchi out, taking care not to clump them together as you drop them in. Give one gentle stir, wait until the gnocchi all float to the surface of the water, and then cook them for 1 minute. Carefully drain the gnocchi in a colander. Transfer them to the sauce and gently toss to coat. Serve immediately, topped with Parmigiano, if using.

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Laura Giannatempo is an associate editor for Fine Cooking and the author of *A Ligurian Kitchen: Recipes and Tales from the Italian Riviera*. ♦

### reader review

A *Fine Cooking* reader gave the Gnocchi with Sausage & Leek Ragù a real-world test. Here are the results:

These gnocchi were so much lighter than others I've tried, and the dough was very easy to roll and cut. I especially liked that I didn't need any special equipment. The ragù was wonderful with the gnocchi. Using leeks instead of onions was a nice touch, and the sausage and fresh herbs added zesty flavor that my husband and I loved. With the gnocchi I served a field-green salad dressed with a light vinaigrette and sprinkled with toasted sliced almonds. It was a very tasty meal.

—Joan Bryant,  
Coronado, California

# Treat Yourself to Bread Pudding

This one is so delicious, it's worth the indulgence—and it's easy to customize with your favorite flavors

BY JOANNE CHANG

I'll let you in on a little restaurant secret: Chefs often create specials to use up leftovers in the kitchen. How does that country pâté with cornichons and mustard sound to you? To the chef it's a perfect use for the bits of pork left over from trimming a loin. As a pastry chef, I've run many a dessert special featuring meringues and a delicious sorbet or fruit coulis, all in an effort to use up extra egg whites and overripe fruit.

That's how bread pudding ended up on the menu at Flour, my bakery and café. Every day, we bake dozens of loaves of bread for our sandwiches, and we're often left with overflowing tubs of extra bread. Some goes to staff members, some gets dropped off at a local shelter, some gets made into bread crumbs, and some turns into bread pudding. This treat is so popular that we sometimes run out of day-old bread and end up using fresh loaves just to keep up with demand.

Given its genesis from leftovers, bread pudding is essentially a humble dessert, but at Flour we've come up with a number of ways to make it decadent, with add-ins and flavorings. The seemingly endless variations are part of the fun of making bread puddings. With one basic recipe you can create a comforting treat for your family, or you can jazz it up for a richer dessert suitable for guests.

I'll walk you through my easy step-by-step method for making bread pudding. There's a bit of planning involved in that the puddings are soaked overnight before baking, but the

actual time spent prepping this dessert is minimal. A few other tricks will help make this dessert a simple and irresistible one that you'll want to make over and over.

**Bread is the heart of this pudding, so choose something you love.** I've offered a number of bread choices, all of which make excellent bread puddings. If you start with an airy, chewy French-style white bread, your bread pudding will have a little more heft and texture than if you use a delicate brioche or a buttery croissant. Either end of the spectrum is delicious, so it's mostly a matter of personal preference.

Regardless of which bread you choose, it's important that the bread be old rather than fresh. The staler the bread, the more readily it will absorb the custard base, so your final product will be that much more tender and flavorful. We often cut our leftover bread into cubes and then leave it out uncovered so that it gets extra dry.

**The custard base I use for my bread pudding is a pretty basic recipe with all of the usual suspects:** eggs, sugar, half-and-half. I've tried making bread puddings with a milk-based custard and with a cream-based custard; as you might guess, the milk one was too lean to enjoy and the cream version was thick and cloying. Half-and-half offers a nice balance of richness without being overwhelming.

Heating the half-and-half before mixing it into the eggs and sugar ensures that the



final base will be thoroughly combined and the sugar will be totally dissolved. It also allows any flavorings that are enhanced by heat (such as vanilla bean) to steep in the custard base. Just be sure to whisk the hot half-and-half slowly into the sugar and egg mixture; if you add it too quickly you run the risk of scrambling your eggs.

It's important to strain the custard before adding the bread to it. Bits of egg or egg shell and any additions you've added to the half-and-half will all distract from the scrumptious custard you've created.

Finally, soak the bread pudding the day before you bake it. The longer it sits, the



### Triple-Berry Bread Pudding

more thoroughly the custard soaks into the bread. An overnight soaking gives you a bread pudding with great texture and loads of flavor.

**Although many custards are baked in a water bath, this one isn't.** A water bath can protect eggs from overcooking and curdling, but for ease and simplicity, my recipe bypasses this step. I bake bread puddings directly in the oven, but to keep them from overbaking, I set the temperature as low as possible—around 325°F. Because the puddings are so full of bread and are baked slowly, they do take a long time in the oven—nearly two hours. But you can

bake them before dinner and serve them just barely warm. I've found that the best way to check for doneness is by poking a small hole in the center with a paring knife. If some liquid custard seeps into the hole, you need to bake another 5 to 10 minutes before checking again.

**My method includes two opportunities to personalize your bread pudding with your favorite flavors**—by infusing the custard in step one and by mixing add-ins to the bread and custard in step three. I've offered some flavor combinations of my own as a starting point, but with a little experimentation, you will soon have your own roster of favorites.

## Some favorite combinations

### Chocolate-Banana Bread Pudding

Chocolate custard base, banana add-in, croissant

### Pumpkin Bread Pudding

Pumpkin custard base, pecan add-in, croissant

### Rum-Raisin Bread Pudding

Rum custard base, raisin add-in, croissant

### Lemon-Coconut Bread Pudding

Lemon custard base, coconut add-in, brioche

### Apricot-Almond Bread Pudding

Almond custard base, apricot add-in, white bread

### Triple-Berry Bread Pudding

Basic custard base, blueberry/raspberry/blackberry add-in, challah

### Mocha Pudding

Coffee custard, bittersweet chocolate add-in, white bread

### Double-Ginger Pudding

Ginger custard, crystallized ginger add-in, challah

# Five easy steps to a delicious bread pudding

Yields one 9x13-inch bread pudding; serves twelve.

## Master Bread Pudding Formula

**7 large egg yolks**  
**3 large eggs**  
**1 cup granulated sugar**  
**1 tsp. table salt**  
**6 cups half-and-half**  
**One-half vanilla bean or 1 Tbs. pure vanilla extract**  
**Your choice of optional custard flavorings (see the box at right for instructions on when to add)**  
**10 cups 1-inch day-old bread cubes**  
**Choice of optional add-ins**

## Equipment

**9x13-inch baking dish**  
**2- to 3-quart saucepan**  
**Strainer**  
**Whisk**  
**2 heatproof bowls**  
**Spatula**



## 1 Make the custard

Before starting, be sure that you have prepped your optional custard flavorings and that you know when to add them (see the box at right).

In a large heatproof bowl, whisk the yolks and eggs. Slowly whisk in the sugar and salt until thoroughly combined.

Pour the half-and-half into a medium saucepan. If using the vanilla bean, split it and scrape the seeds into the half-and-half. Add the scraped bean to the pan, too. Heat over medium-high heat until steaming but not bubbling.

Slowly whisk the half-and-half into the egg mixture until thoroughly combined. Strain the mixture through a fine sieve into a large Pyrex measuring cup or heatproof bowl. Add the vanilla extract, if not using the bean.

## Optional flavorings

Choose one

**Almond:** Add 1½ tsp. almond extract to the strained custard.

**Chocolate:** Add 2 cups chopped bitter-sweet chocolate to the hot half-and-half. Whisk to melt.

**Coffee:** Add 2 tsp. instant espresso powder to the hot half-and-half. Whisk to dissolve.

**Ginger:** Add ½ cup finely chopped fresh ginger to the half-and-half before heating. After heating, let steep off the heat for 10 minutes before adding to the eggs.

**Lemon:** Add the finely grated zest of 3 lemons to the half-and-half before heating. Whisk the juice from 3 lemons (about ½ cup) into the strained custard.

**Pumpkin:** Whisk 1¼ cups pure canned pumpkin, 1 tsp. ground cinnamon, and ¼ tsp. freshly grated nutmeg into the strained custard.

**Rum:** Increase the sugar by ¼ cup and add ⅓ cup dark rum to the strained custard.



## Bread choices

**10 cups 1-inch day-old cubes**

**Brioche**

**Challah**

**Croissant**

**White artisan-style bread (like Tuscan or French)**

## 2 Soak the bread

Put the bread cubes in a 9x13-inch baking dish and pour the custard on top. Make sure the bread is as submerged in the custard as possible and let cool at room temperature for about an hour. Cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate for at least 5 and up to 24 hours.





## 3 Fold in the add-ins

If you'd like to include add-ins, transfer the bread mixture to a large mixing bowl and gently fold in the add-ins just before baking. Return the mixture to the baking dish.

### Optional add-ins

Choose one or two

- 3 ripe bananas, thinly sliced
- 1½ cups toasted sweetened shredded coconut
- 3½ cups fresh or frozen berries, such as blueberries, raspberries, or blackberries
- 1½ cups toasted coarsely chopped pecans
- 1 cup chopped bittersweet or semisweet chocolate
- 1 cup chopped dried apricots, soaked in very hot water for 30 minutes and drained thoroughly
- 1 cup golden raisins, soaked in very hot water for 30 minutes and drained thoroughly
- ½ cup chopped crystallized ginger

**tip:** Pick your favorite add-ins to boost the flavor and texture of your bread pudding, but don't go overboard—more than two and they'll overwhelm the velvety custard.

## 4 Bake the pudding

Cover the pudding loosely with foil and bake at 325°F for 70 minutes. Remove the foil and continue to bake until no liquid custard is visible when you poke a small hole in the center with a paring knife, 20 to 40 minutes more, depending on the type of custard and add-ins.



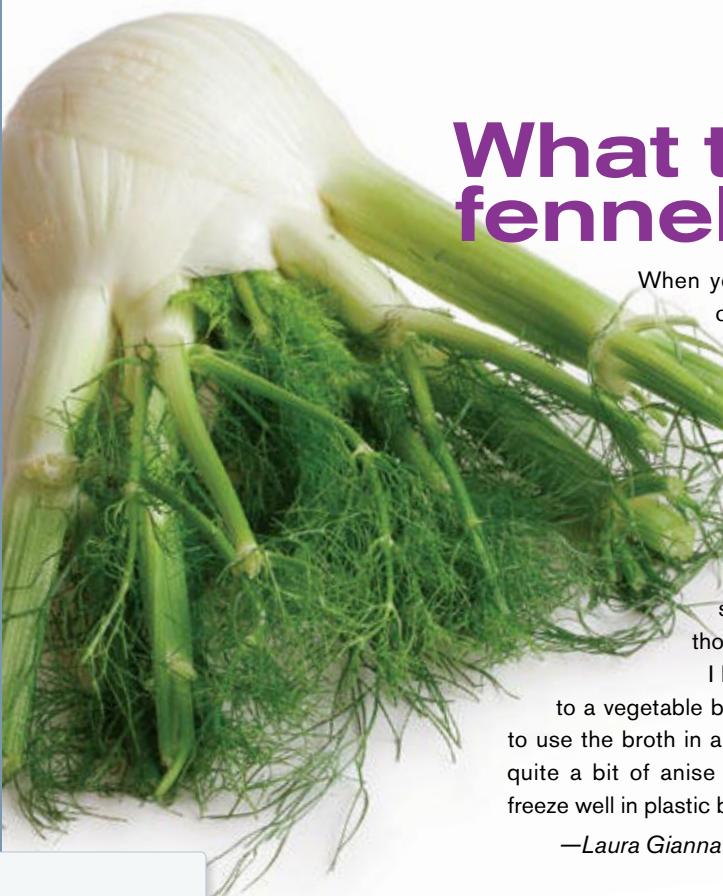
## 5 Serve the pudding

Let the pudding cool on a rack. Serve warm, at room temperature, or chilled, with a dollop of whipped cream, if desired.

Rum-Raisin Bread Pudding



*Joanne Chang is the pastry chef and owner of Flour Bakery + Café, which has two locations in Boston. ♦*



## What to do with fennel stalks & fronds

When you buy fennel, it often comes with its stalks and dill-like fronds attached. However, most recipes (like the ones on pp. 46–50) call for fennel bulbs only. This doesn't mean you have to throw the stalks and fronds away, though.

I like to add fennel stalks to a vegetable broth, especially if I plan to use the broth in a fennel dish—they lend quite a bit of anise flavor. The stalks also freeze well in plastic bags for later use.

—Laura Giannatempo, associate editor

You can use the mildly anise-flavored fronds as you would a fresh herb in several ways:

- ❖ In salads, especially if the salad contains fennel
- ❖ Tucked in the cavity of roasted chicken or whole fish, alone or with other aromatics
- ❖ Chopped and added to marinades for fish or meat, along with garlic and other herbs
- ❖ Added to chunky vegetable soups during the last minutes of simmering
- ❖ As a bed for roasting swordfish or halibut fillets (both fronds and stalks)

Fennel stalks & fronds	70
Fried capers	70
Fish from sustainable sources	71
Storing fish	71
Roasting small peppers	71
Strained yogurt	72
Louisiana-style hot sauce	73
Cardamom	74
Masala chai	74

BY DABNEY GOUGH

## Fried capers, an addictive garnish

Capers, the pickled or salted flower buds of a Mediterranean bush, are normally rinsed or soaked and then added to dishes like salsa verde or puttanesca sauce, where they lend a briny edge. But fry capers in a little olive oil, and something magical happens: They open up like a flower and the "petals" become crisp and golden. In this form, they're an elegant garnish for salads, roasted fish, or grilled meats—and they're addictive little nibbles on their own, too. Leftover frying oil will be infused with caper flavor and may be drizzled on meats, fish, or vegetables.

### Fried capers are quick to prepare.

#### Here's how:

- 1 If using brined capers, drain them and pat dry with a paper towel. If using salted capers, soak in water for 30 minutes and then drain and pat dry.
- 2 Heat  $\frac{1}{8}$  inch (about  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup) of olive or vegetable oil in a small saucepan or skillet over medium-high heat. When the oil is hot, add the capers 1 to 2 tablespoons at a time—they'll give off some liquid at first, so watch out for spattering oil. Fry,



swirling the pan gently, until just golden brown, about 45 seconds for small (nonpareil) capers or 90 seconds for large (capote) capers.

- 3 Using a slotted spoon, transfer the capers to a plate lined with paper towels to drain. Blot gently to absorb excess oil. Cool briefly before using.

# Buying fish you can feel good about



## quick tip



## Roasting small peppers

Roasting peppers over a gas stove burner is an easy way to transform their flavor and texture. However, small peppers, like jalapeños, have a tendency to roll off the burner grate and onto the drip pan below. To create a more stable surface, just set an uncoated wire cooling rack directly on the grate.

Not so very long ago, the world's oceans teemed with fish. But growing demand

coupled with unsustainable fishing and fish farming methods has led to a drastic change—today, nearly 75% of the world's fisheries are believed to be either fully fished or overfished.

As seafood consumers, we have the power to help. By asking for and purchasing seafood from sustainable sources, we can take pressure off endangered fisheries and feel better about the fish we're eating, too.

Here's how to make a difference: First, get one of the sustainable seafood pocket buying guides offered free by several organizations either online or by mail. Our favorite is the Monterey Bay Aquarium's Seafood Watch program because it's broken down into regional guides. Other good ones include the Blue Ocean Institute's Guide to

Ocean Friendly Seafood and Audubon's Living Ocean Seafood Lover's Guide.

Take the guide along when next you shop for fish, and ask lots of questions at the fish counter—the labeling at many markets is vague. Don't take "I don't know" for an answer, and be flexible. Say you're planning to make the Cod with Mushrooms, Garlic & Vermouth on this issue's cover, recipe p. 86a, but your market carries Atlantic cod (bad choice), not Pacific cod (better choice). The Atlantic codfish will thank you if you make something else for dinner—haddock and pollock are good cod substitutes.

While you're there, request that the store adopt a sustainable seafood labeling program like the ones from the Marine Stewardship Council ([www.msc.org](http://www.msc.org)) or FishWise ([www.sustainablefishery.org](http://www.sustainablefishery.org)). You can learn more about these programs at their Web sites; the FishWise site also has links to the seafood buying guides mentioned above.

—Jennifer Armentrout, test kitchen manager

## How to store fish

The first step in making a great fish dish is to buy great fish (no surprise there). So you go to the market, bring home your "catch," and then what? Keeping your fish in prime condition is all about good storage.

**Put your fish away before anything else.** The less time it spends out of refrigeration, the better. So for that matter, visit the fish counter last when shopping, and ask them to pack the fish on ice if you won't be going home immediately.

**Rinse fish in cold running water** to help reduce surface bacteria. Pat dry with a paper towel.

**Wrap fish in waxed paper and then put it in a tightly covered container.** This helps the fish maintain just enough moisture and keeps any liquid runoff from contaminating other food.

**Use within a day or two.** Always do the sniff test—if it smells "off" or overly fishy, change your menu plans. It never hurts to follow the adage, "When in doubt, throw it out."





Mango Lassi Parfait, p. 60

## Strained yogurt is better for cooking

Originating in the Balkan mountains thousands of years ago, yogurt is nothing more than milk whose proteins have been rearranged by special bacteria, a process that can happen naturally in the right conditions.

Regular yogurt can be on the thin side, but straining it to remove some of the whey produces a thicker, creamier yogurt with more fat, protein, and calcium. The higher fat content makes strained yogurt less likely to curdle when heated, so it works well in soups, sauces, and other cooked dishes like

the Spinach with Yogurt & Chickpeas on p. 60. In uncooked foods, like dips, spreads, and the tangy whipped cream in the Mango Lassi Parfait on p. 60, its thicker consistency is what counts.

There are a few styles of strained yogurt, and they offer great diversity in their flavors, textures, and consistencies. The type of milk, the length of culturing, and the amount of

straining are just a few factors that affect the outcome.

**Greek yogurt** is by definition strained yogurt. Traditionally made with sheep's milk, most commercial Greek yogurt in the United States is made with cow's milk. We use the widely available Fage Total brand in our test kitchen. **Greek-style yogurt** is strained, but it's not necessarily from Greece. Some, especially domestic ones, may have added thickeners or stabilizers.

For an easy dessert, try Greek yogurt drizzled with a little honey and sprinkled with chopped pistachios or walnuts.

Middle Eastern in origin, **labne** runs the gamut from a sour cream-like consistency (akin to Greek yogurt) to a cream cheese-like consistency (which is also called "yogurt cheese"). Labne is also strained, but it often has salt added prior to straining, and in the case of yogurt cheese, it's strained for much longer. Some labne, like the one shown at left, is made from kefir, a yogurt-like dairy product that also contains yeast.

For an appetizer, form 1-inch yogurt cheese balls, drizzle with olive oil, sprinkle with fresh herbs, and serve with flatbread.



## How to strain yogurt at home

If you want to make our Indian-inspired menu on pp. 56–60 but can't find Greek yogurt, you can strain regular plain yogurt at home. The dishes, however, may taste a little less rich, depending on the yogurt you start with.

To strain regular yogurt to a Greek yogurt consistency, set a fine sieve lined with cheesecloth, a coffee filter, or a plain white paper towel over a bowl and spoon plain whole-milk yogurt into the sieve. Refrigerate and allow the liquid to drain off for two hours. One cup of yogurt yields about  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup, so to make the  $1\frac{3}{4}$  cups called for in the menu, start with  $3\frac{1}{2}$  cups.

To make yogurt cheese, start with a yogurt that has no added gelatin, starch, or pectin, because these ingredients keep the yogurt from draining as well. Strain the yogurt until it's about as thick as cream cheese, 12 to 24 hours.

If you think you'll frequently strain yogurt at home, consider getting a yogurt strainer, like the Cuisipro Donvier strainer shown at right (see p. 80 for a mail-order source). It consists of a covered plastic container fit with a specially designed mesh strainer that efficiently drains yogurt. It's easy to fit in the refrigerator, and it protects the yogurt from picking up odors in the fridge. —J. A.





## Add a tangy kick: Louisiana hot sauce

There's a world of hot sauce out there, but there's nothing quite like the piquant zing of Louisiana-style sauces. Why? Louisiana hot sauces are vinegar-based, so along with a spicy kick, their acidity lends a certain brightness to rich, earthy dishes like the gumbos on pp. 51–55. So if you're making one of the gumbos, don't be tempted to use a style of hot sauce that's not vinegary (such as many Asian types of hot sauce or chile paste). The vinegar in the sauce is an important finishing touch.

Louisiana-style hot sauces get their heat from tabasco or cayenne chiles or both, which are mashed and aged to develop the flavors. Aside from the chiles and vinegar, salt and water are often the only other ingredients. Tabasco brand is probably the most famous (and one of the hottest) of the genre, but there are many others: Frank's RedHot, Crystal, Texas Pete, and Louisiana Hot Sauce are just a few. Most are widely available in the United States, but if you don't live stateside, see p. 80 for a mail-order source.



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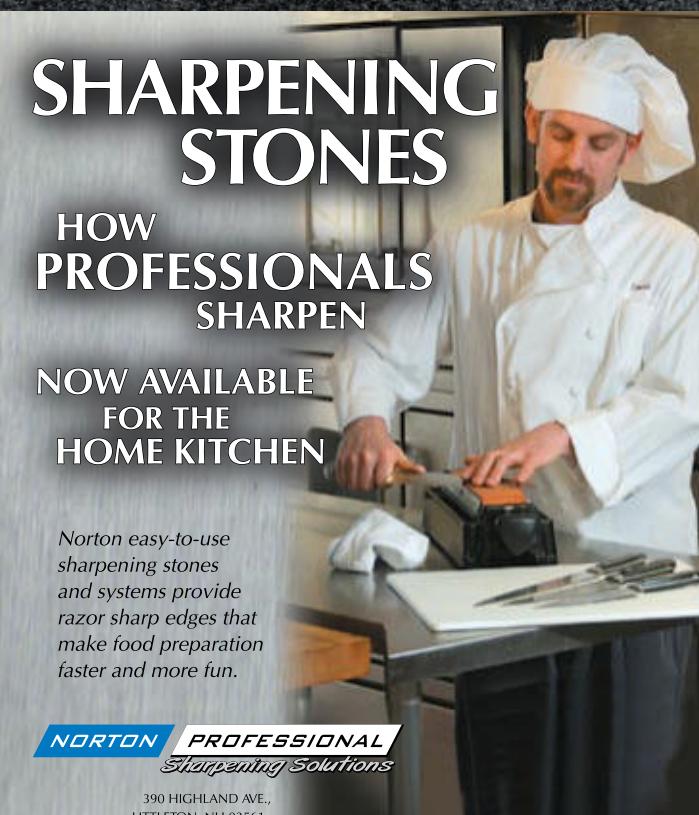

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# Cardamom

Intensely aromatic, sweet, complex, spicy, beguiling, heady—these all describe cardamom, a spice that appears throughout classical Indian cuisine in everything from garam masala to masala chai (spiced tea) to kheer (a sweet rice dessert). Cardamom is also used extensively in the Middle East to flavor coffee, and thanks to the Vikings' 11th century presence in Constantinople, it often appears in Scandinavian breads, cookies, and other baked goods.

## What it is

Native to India, cardamom is related to ginger. But whereas ginger is valued for its rhizome (an underground part of the plant), it's cardamom's dried seed pods that are most commonly used in cooking.

## How to buy & store it

Many supermarkets carry ground cardamom, but whole pods are a little trickier to find. An Indian market is your best bet, or see p. 80 for a mail-order source.

Keep cardamom in a tightly sealed container in a cool, dark place. Whole pods will last about a year this way and will begin to lose their flavor thereafter. Ground cardamom seeds have a shelf life of only a few months because the essential oils begin to dissipate as soon as the seeds are ground. For this reason, you may want to buy whole pods and grind the seeds as you need them.

## How to use it

Whole pods are best used in recipes with some sort of liquid for the cardamom to infuse. The pods that encase cardamom seeds have little flavor on their

own, but they are a handy way to keep the seeds contained. Crushing the pod slightly helps expose the aromatic seeds inside. The pods may be removed from the dish before serving, or you can just eat around them.

Ground cardamom is used in recipes where whole pods or seeds are undesirable. A little ground cardamom goes a long way, particularly if freshly ground, so use it sparingly. To grind cardamom yourself, first remove the seeds by crushing the pods with the broad side of a knife and shaking out the seeds. Pulverize the seeds in a spice grinder.

## The three basic varieties of cardamom

**Green, or "true" cardamom**, which is used in our Indian menu on pp. 56–60, is considered the finest and most aromatic of the three types. It's used in sweet and savory dishes throughout India.

**White cardamom** pods are green pods that have been bleached for aesthetic purposes, such as for light-colored breads and batters. The bleaching process diminishes some of the flavor, so avoid white cardamom unless a uniform light color is needed.

**Black cardamom** comes from a different variety of the same plant. It has a distinctly smoky aroma and a strong, somewhat medicinal flavor. The skins of the pods are wrinkly and a bit thicker than those of green cardamom. Black cardamom appears in savory dishes in India, Morocco, and China.



### Masala Chai

*Yields 3 3/4 cups; serves four.*

If you find typical coffeehouse chai overpowering, try this version of the well-known Indian spiced tea. Dubbed "chai lite" by one of our tasters, its judicious use of spices results in a kinder, gentler cuppa.

- 1 Tbs. loose black tea, such as English Breakfast or Darjeeling
- 6 green cardamom pods, gently crushed
- 5 cloves
- 1 small cinnamon stick (about 1½ inches long)
- ¼ tsp. black peppercorns
- ¾ cup whole milk
- 2 Tbs. granulated sugar; more to taste

In a small saucepan, bring 3½ cups of water to a boil. Remove from the heat and add the tea, cardamom, cloves, cinnamon, and peppercorns. Let steep uncovered for 4 minutes, stirring once or twice.

Pour through a fine strainer set over a bowl, rinse the saucepan, and pour the tea back into the pan. Add the milk and sugar and stir until the sugar is dissolved. Add more sugar to taste. Reheat if necessary over low heat, but do not boil. Serve hot. ♦



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# Ozone in the Kitchen

## Do you really need an ozone sanitizer to disinfect your food?

BY ROBERT L. WOLKE

Perhaps you know that the upper atmosphere's ozone layer protects us from the sun's harmful ultraviolet radiation. But did you know that ozone can also protect you by killing any pathogenic bacteria, viruses, and molds that might lurk on the surface of your foods? It's true. And for anywhere from \$50 to \$200 you can buy a machine that will generate ozone right in your own kitchen.

Given the spate of reports about contaminated produce in recent years, it's hard not to worry about what hazards we

might bring home in our grocery bags. But do you really need to disinfect your food with ozone? Here are a few things to consider before you decide:

- ❖ Most produce is not contaminated and traditional washing techniques are sufficient for cleaning it.
- ❖ Sanitizing food that you intend to cook (which the literature accompanying one of the devices recommends) is just plain silly because the heat of cooking will kill most pathogenic microbes. But if you're concerned about food that you

plan to eat raw, ozone sanitization may make sense.

❖ The literature that accompanies these machines says that they can keep your foods "fresh" and "more healthful," and maybe "even save your life." Those are grand claims, but without enlisting the services of a sophisticated laboratory to put them to the test, I can't say for certain whether these products really do accomplish these objectives.

❖ The machines are also supposedly able to eliminate carcinogens, hormones, antibiotics,

and pesticides. But as a chemist, I'm very skeptical about these claims. Even if hormones and antibiotics are present in factory-farmed meat, ozone can't reach them; it's just a surface treatment. And even if traces of pesticides and other chemicals are on foods' surfaces, there are hundreds of such substances, and while some can be broken down by ozone, many cannot.

But, anyway, it's harmful microbes that we're most worried about—and ozone does indeed kill those. That much is indisputable.

## How does ozone sanitize food?

Ozone is a form of oxygen that contains three atoms of oxygen per molecule ( $O_3$ ) instead of the normal two ( $O_2$ ). It isn't happy with that extra, three's-a-crowd atom, so it gets rid of it as soon as it can by foisting it upon any receptive molecule it comes in contact with, thereby oxidizing it.

Oxidation changes substances chemically, often in drastic ways, and the odds are pretty good that a colored or smelly molecule will be turned into one that is neither colored nor smelly. Thus, oxidation can bleach some colors and destroy some flavor- and odor-causing compounds. It can also kill bacteria and viruses by attacking and rupturing their cell walls or protective coatings. (If you're thinking that ozone does precisely what household

chlorine bleach does, you're right, except that ozone is a much stronger oxidizer, and it leaves no lingering odor or toxic residue.)

Ozone is a gas, so you can't just keep a bottle of it around and pour yourself a glass whenever you need it. Moreover, ozone is unstable. When mixed with air, half of it disappears in three days by reverting to regular oxygen,  $O_2$ . But ozone dissolves in water—about 13 times more readily than regular oxygen—so you can make "ozonated" water and use it as you would a liquid disinfectant. The thing is, in water, ozone decomposes even faster than in air; half of it disappears in just 15 to 20 minutes. So if you want ozonated water, you have to make it fresh and use it fast.

## Did you know?

Ozone generators also have been sold to "purify the air" in homes. But ozone is quite toxic to breathe. The United States Environmental Protection Agency has concluded that "the concentration of ozone would have to greatly exceed health standards to be effective in removing most indoor air contaminants." The ozone-generating devices we're discussing here don't put ozone into the air, except perhaps inside the refrigerator, where it's not apt to be a problem.

## An overview of ozone sanitizers

I've seen three kinds of ozone generators designed expressly for home food disinfection, and I tried one of each type.

**1. Machines that make batches of ozonated water, either in a plastic bowl containing the food to be washed or in a removable spray bottle.** Ozonated water looks perfectly normal, so it may be hard to believe that it's capable of sanitizing anything. But I have seen the results of tests performed by an independent laboratory on one such machine, the Lotus Sanitizing System. The results show that the ozonated water reduced the amounts of *E. coli*, *Salmonella*, and *Listeria* bacteria on a variety of vegetables by an average of 99.9%. So it really does work.

With a spray bottle, I spritzed ozonated water on an iodine stain, a cat stain on the carpet, a veritable Jackson Pollack of splatters on a kitchen towel, and on stains from barbecue sauce, Worcestershire sauce, and grape jelly on my shirt (deliberately applied, I hasten to add). In every case, the stain was almost completely gone after three or four spray-and-wipe treatments.

**2. Machines that are essentially washing machines for produce.** These vigorously whirl and

slosh your fruits and vegetables around in ozonated water—so vigorously, in fact, that in one of my tests it abraded the skin off a ripe peach. I have no doubt that such machines do an effective washing job, though I haven't seen actual before-and-after microbe counts. The models I've seen are big and heavy and claim a prime plot of countertop real estate right next to the sink, where the machine needs to be kept for filling and draining.

**3. Machines that release ozone gas into your refrigerator.** On the upside, these devices are small and relatively inexpensive. On the downside, I can't help but wonder if they work. They sit in your fridge and generate ozone gas that reputedly deodorizes and disinfects everything inside. Sounds great, but if it is your habit occasionally to open the refrigerator door, it would seem to me that most of the heavier-than-air ozone would spill out. To test the effectiveness of these machines, one would have to compare the numbers of bacteria and viruses, both with and without the gadget, inside many refrigerators with many kinds of contents. To my knowledge, this has never been done.

## The bottom line

Ozone sanitizers are what I call "feel-good appliances." If you believe that food is crawling with dangerous bacteria, molds, and viruses—which is far from a foregone conclusion—then using one of these machines routinely on all your fresh produce could make you feel a lot better. But for most people, they're not necessary.

As for me, I'll welcome an occasional spray bottle of ozonated

water into my house for bleaching stains and sanitizing cutting boards and countertops. But I'll continue to trust that a plain cold-water wash will keep my fruits and vegetables from killing me.

*Robert L. Wolke, professor emeritus of chemistry at the University of Pittsburgh, is the author of What Einstein Told His Cook 2: Further Adventures in Kitchen Science. ♦*

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# Shopping for Capers

BY LAURA GIANNATEMPO

Tangy Mediterranean dishes like penne alla puttanesca, chicken piccata, or the braised fennel on p. 50 get their delicious salty punch from capers. Small but packed with sharp flavor, capers are the unopened flower buds of the caper shrub, which grows all over the Mediterranean coast. Unappetizing when fresh, capers are usually sun-dried and cured in a mixture of brine and vinegar or in salt. Since we use capers often to punch up pasta sauces, relishes, and fish dishes, we wanted to find out which brands are worth stashing in the pantry. So we tasted jars and jars of capers—in brine and in salt. And here's what we found.



## Capers in brine

In grocery stores in this country you're more likely to find jars of brined capers, while salted capers are available only in specialty food stores and some supermarkets.

After blind-testing several widely available brands of nonpareil capers (the smallest and most aromatic kind) in brine, **Roland** capers (\$3.59 for 3 ounces) soared to the top with their perfect balance of brine, vinegar, and salt and their firm, pleasantly crunchy texture. We'd add them to a remoulade or puttanesca sauce any time. We also liked **B&G** capers (\$3.79 for 3.5 ounces), although they pack a slightly stronger punch. Rinse them well to take the edge off before you use them.

## Meet caper berries

Caper berries are the mature fruit of the caper shrub. They're larger but milder and sweeter than capers—that's why they're often used instead of brined olives. They're generally sold in jars, pickled in a vinegary brine. Try them in an antipasto platter, in salads, or even in martinis. Our favorite caper berries are the Spanish **Piter Alcaparrones**, available at Tienda.com for \$6.95 for a 6-ounce jar. They're crunchy, fleshy, and rich, with just enough salty flavor to keep them interesting—perfect for snacking straight out of the jar.



## Capers in salt

While capers in brine often end up tasting like what's in the brine and lose some of their crunchy texture to the liquid, capers that are cured in salt tend to maintain both flavor and texture. But they do get pretty salty. So it's a good idea to soak them in water for 10 or 15 minutes and rinse them well before using. Our favorite salted capers were **La Nicchia** capers from Pantelleria, a tiny island off the southwestern coast of Sicily. They're plump, firm, and crunchy (in a good way), with a true caper flavor and lovely floral, anise-like notes. Save these for special occasions, when you really want the capers to shine—we even toss them in salads. You can find them at Gustiamo.com for \$14 for a 3.5-ounce jar.

**Agostino Recca** salted capers also pack a nice caper flavor at a more affordable price: about \$4 for a 2.2-ounce jar. Plus, they're available in many grocery stores (or you can mail-order them at Amazon.com).



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## Fennel, p. 46

You don't need a mandoline to cut fennel ultrathin, but this tool will give you ethereal, paper-thin slices for the Fennel Layered with Potatoes & Breadcrumbs. Oxo makes a user-friendly mandoline—it's \$69.99 at Oxo.com (800-545-4411). For the Pan-Fried Crisp Fennel, you'll need a candy thermometer to measure the oil temperature. Try a Taylor brand candy and deep-fry thermometer, which sells for \$9.95 at Cooking.com (800-663-8810).



## Pasta on the Side, p. 42

Fregola sarda (\$7.49 for a 500-gram bag) and Israeli couscous (\$4.79 for a 1-pound bag) are available online at ChefShop.com (800-596-0885); you can also find these ingredients at specialty stores.



## A Passage to India, p. 56

Visit [AdrianasCaravan.com](http://AdrianasCaravan.com) (800-316-0820) for cardamom pods (from \$4.50) and fenugreek seeds (from \$1.50). The site also carries garam masala (from \$2.50), though you can find it in many supermarkets.

## In Season, p. 24

If you'd like to mail-order fresh golden, white, or Chioggia (also known as Candy Cane) beets, visit [Melissas.com](http://Melissas.com) (800-588-0151).



## From Our Test Kitchen, p. 70

Louisiana-style hot sauces like Frank's RedHot, Louisiana, Crystal, Texas Pete, and Tabasco brands, are all sold at Amazon.com (prices start at \$1.79). There, you'll also find a Cuisipro Donvier yogurt cheese maker (\$15.95).

For cardamom pods, see the source under "A Passage to India."

For good-quality vanilla beans, visit [Penzeys.com](http://Penzeys.com) (800-741-7787), which sells them in packs of 3 for \$6.89 and 15 for \$27.29.

## Back cover

For a heavy-duty rimmed baking sheet, try Chicago Metallic's commercial version, available at [Kitchen-Universe.com](http://Kitchen-Universe.com) (800-481-6679) for \$14.95 (search for "jelly roll pan"). ♦

## Gumbo, p. 51

For a broad selection of good-quality Dutch ovens, look to [ChefsResource.com](http://ChefsResource.com) (866-765-2433) which carries both Le Creuset and Staub brands. We also like Lodge's enameled Dutch ovens; a 5-quart version is \$167.95 at [LodgeMfg.com](http://LodgeMfg.com) (423-837-7181).

Look for filé powder in specialty stores or order it from [TheSpiceHouse.com](http://TheSpiceHouse.com); prices range from \$2.09 for a 1-ounce bag to \$10.79 for an 8-ounce bag.



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Recipe	Page	Calories		Protein	Carb	Fats (g)				Chol.	Sodium	Fiber	Notes
		total	from fat	(g)	(g)	total	sat	mono	poly	(mg)	(mg)	(g)	
<b>In Season</b>	24												
Roasted Beets with White Balsamic-Citrus Dressing		90	60	1	8	7	1	5	1	0	260	1	based on 4 servings
<b>Roasted Pork Loin</b>	36												
Roasted Pork Loin with Maple-Mustard Crust		570	210	62	25	24	8	11	2	170	1250	3	based on 5.6-oz. serving
Chinese Pork & Mushroom Wraps		330	120	14	36	14	2.5	7	3	70	730	4	based on 8 servings
New Mexican Pork & Green Chile Stew		460	150	32	43	16	6	7	1.5	75	890	5	based on 4 servings
Grilled Roast Pork Cubano Sandwiches		730	280	35	77	31	13	12	3	85	2370	5	based on 4 servings
<b>Pasta on the Side</b>	42												
Fregola with Wild Mushrooms, Sherry & Cream		300	200	5	19	22	12	8	1	65	240	1	based on 6 servings
Israeli Couscous with Saffron, Pine Nuts & Currants		360	130	8	49	15	1.5	8	3.5	0	290	4	based on 6 servings
Orzo with Lemon, Garlic, Parmigiano & Herbs		310	80	11	45	9	5	2.5	1	20	360	3	based on 8 servings
<b>Fennel</b>	46												
Fennel Layered with Potatoes & Breadcrumbs		230	110	4	28	12	2.5	7	1	5	510	4	based on 8 servings
Fennel & Orange Salad with Red Onion & Olives		120	70	2	13	8	1	6	1	0	240	4	based on 6 servings
Pan-Fried Crisp Fennel		100	50	3	8	6	1	3.5	0.5	55	250	2	based on 8 servings
Braised Fennel with Tomato, Green Olives & Capers		200	140	2	13	16	2	12	1.5	0	890	5	based on 4 servings
<b>Gumbo</b>	51												
Poppy Tooker's Seafood Gumbo		370	150	24	32	17	2	7	7	150	600	4	based on 8 servings
Chicken-Andouille Filé Gumbo		500	260	32	28	29	8	9	7	80	750	2	based on 10 servings
<b>Indian Menu</b>	56												
Toasted Spiced Cashews		210	140	6	15	16	3	9	2.5	0	115	1	based on 16 servings
Basmati Rice Pilaf with Pistachios		290	90	8	46	10	1	5	3	0	100	2	based on 8 servings
Indian-Spiced Chicken with Lime & Cilantro		420	160	60	2	18	4.5	8	4	165	310	1	based on 6 servings
Spinach with Yogurt & Chickpeas		140	50	7	17	6	3	1.5	0	15	300	5	based on 6 servings
Mango Lassi Parfait		290	180	4	27	19	10	6	1.5	60	35	2	based on 6 servings
<b>Gnocchi</b>	61												
Potato Gnocchi (Master Recipe)		240	10	7	52	1	0	0	0	35	210	3	based on 6 servings
Gnocchi with Sausage & Leek Ragù		440	130	14	63	14	4	8	1.5	50	1140	6	based on 6 servings
Gnocchi with Creamy Gorgonzola Sauce		590	300	16	54	34	21	7	1	155	840	4	based on 6 servings
Pan-Seared Gnocchi with Browned Butter & Sage		430	190	7	52	22	13	6	1	90	720	3	based on 6 servings
<b>Bread Pudding</b>	66												
Master Bread Pudding Formula		350	170	9	37	19	10	6	1.5	215	460	1	based on 12 servings
Rum-Raisin Bread Pudding		460	210	10	51	24	13	7	1.5	235	480	1	based on 12 servings
Lemon-Coconut Bread Pudding		430	240	10	40	27	16	6	1	260	420	1	based on 12 servings
Apricot-Almond Bread Pudding		380	170	9	44	19	10	6	1.5	215	460	1	based on 12 servings
Triple-Berry Bread Pudding		400	190	10	45	21	10	6	1	235	490	2	based on 12 servings
<b>Test Kitchen</b>	70												
Masala Chai		50	15	1	8	1.5	1	0	0	5	20	0	based on 4 servings
<b>Quick &amp; Delicious</b>	86a												
Mussels Steamed with Leeks, Tomatoes & Garlic		320	190	18	16	21	3	14	3	40	680	1	4 servings w/o bread
Broiled Miso-Marinated Halibut		430	230	30	12	26	4.5	15	2.5	85	920	3	based on 4 servings
Herb & Parmigiano-Crusted Tilapia with Tomato Sauce		420	230	38	11	26	5	16	3	105	730	2	based on 4 servings
Seared Scallops with Golden Shallot & Grapefruit Sauce		440	260	38	6	29	4	20	3.5	85	710	0	based on 4 servings
Cod with Mushrooms, Garlic & Vermouth		280	110	29	4	13	7	3	1	95	240	1	based on 4 servings
Salmon Seared on Bacon with Balsamic Vinegar		320	120	40	7	14	2.5	4.5	5	110	440	0	based on 4 servings
Cumin-Rubbed Tuna with Roasted-Jalapeño Tartar Sauce		570	250	72	3	29	4	7	7	155	630	1	based on 4 servings
<b>Back Cover</b>													
Shrimp Roasted with Potatoes & Prosciutto		480	170	47	31	19	3.5	10	2.5	355	1300	3	based on 4 servings

The nutritional analyses have been calculated by a registered dietitian at Nutritional Solutions in Melville, New York. When a recipe gives a choice of ingredients, the first choice is the one used. Optional

ingredients with measured amounts are included; ingredients without specific quantities are not. When a range of ingredient amounts or servings is given, the smaller amount or portion is used. When the

quantities of salt and pepper aren't specified, the analysis is based on ¼ teaspoon salt and ½ teaspoon pepper per serving for entrées, and ½ teaspoon salt and ¼ teaspoon pepper per serving for side dishes.



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# Shrimp Supper, Simplified

For lots of flavor with minimal effort, try these roasted shrimp with crispy potatoes and prosciutto, seasoned with lemon, garlic, and just a hit of cayenne. We love that the ingredients all roast together in one pan, so once it's in the oven, the cooking is mostly hands-off. Meanwhile, you're free to toss a simple green salad, which is all you need to round out the meal.



## A hardy pan for a roasty dish

Preheating the baking sheet helps to crisp up the potatoes. But don't use a flimsy baking sheet—you'll need a heavy-duty rimmed pan that won't warp in the oven. Look for a commercial-grade steel version, preferably one with rolled edges. For sources, see p. 80.

For more weeknight seafood ideas, turn to Quick & Delicious, inside the back cover.

## Shrimp Roasted with Potatoes & Prosciutto

Serves four.

To make this recipe even easier, use frozen "easy-peel" shrimp, which have already been deveined. Thaw the shrimp by putting them in a colander and running them under cold water.

**1½ lb. yellow or red-skinned potatoes, cut into ½-inch dice**  
**4 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil**  
**½ tsp. kosher salt; more as needed**  
**¼ tsp. cayenne**  
**1½ lb. large shrimp (21 to 25 per lb.), peeled and deveined**  
**1 tsp. finely grated lemon zest**  
**Freshly ground black pepper**  
**¼ lb. thinly sliced prosciutto, cut into ¼-inch-wide strips**  
**2 large cloves garlic, chopped**  
**½ cup chopped fresh parsley**

Position a rack in the bottom third of the oven, and put a heavy-duty rimmed baking sheet on the rack. Heat the oven to 500°F.

In a medium bowl, toss the potatoes with 3 Tbs. of the oil and the salt and cayenne. Carefully spread the potatoes in a single layer on the preheated baking sheet. Roast, loosening and turning the potatoes with a metal spatula after 15 minutes, until tender and golden, 20 to 25 minutes total.

Meanwhile, pat the shrimp dry with paper towels. In a medium bowl, toss them with the remaining 1 Tbs. oil, the lemon zest, a pinch of salt, and 2 to 3 grinds of pepper.

Stir the prosciutto and garlic into the potatoes and continue to roast for another 5 minutes. Push the potatoes to one side of the pan and add the shrimp to the empty side. Spread in a single layer and roast until the shrimp curl and are just cooked through, about 5 minutes. Sprinkle with the parsley, stir everything together, and serve immediately.

*Leslie Glover Pendleton is the author of Simply Shrimp, Salmon and (Fish) Steaks. ♦*

# Quick Fish

BY LESLIE GLOVER PENDLETON

For me, when it comes to cooking seafood, there are three key rules to live by:

First, don't limit yourself to the fish mentioned in a recipe. If it calls for cod and your market doesn't have any (or if it's not great quality), substitute an alternative like haddock, halibut, or mahi mahi. Your fish seller can offer you some options.

Next, treat cooking times as a guideline, not as gospel. Stoves, ovens, and pans vary; so does the thickness of each piece of fish. To determine the doneness of fish steaks and fillets, I use a paring knife to peek inside the fish, and I cook it just until it no longer appears raw. (Tuna is the exception—it's best seared on the outside but still raw on the inside).

And finally, I love fish skin, especially when it's crisp, as in the recipe for Salmon Seared on Bacon with Balsamic Vinegar, Honey & Rosemary. For this recipe, make sure the fish is scaled. But if you prefer your fish skinless, your seafood seller can easily remove it for you.

For more on buying and storing fish, see From Our Test Kitchen, p. 70.



## Cod with Mushrooms, Garlic & Vermouth

Serves four.

**4 Tbs. cold unsalted butter**  
**10 oz. white or baby bella (cremini) mushrooms, wiped clean and sliced about  $\frac{1}{8}$  inch thick**  
**4 medium cloves garlic, minced**  
**1/2 cup dry vermouth**  
**3 1/2 Tbs. chopped fresh parsley**  
**1 Tbs. balsamic vinegar**  
**1/2 tsp. kosher salt; more to taste**  
**1/4 tsp. freshly ground black pepper; more to taste**  
**Four 6-oz. skinless cod fillets**

In a heavy 12-inch skillet, melt 3 Tbs. of the butter over medium-high heat. Add the mushrooms and cook, stirring only occasionally, until well browned, 5 to 7 minutes. Add the garlic and cook, stirring, until golden and fragrant, about 45 seconds. Add the vermouth, 3 Tbs. of the parsley, the vinegar, salt, and pepper and boil until the liquid is reduced by half, about 2 minutes.

Remove the pan from the heat, lightly season the cod with salt and pepper and add

it to the pan (tuck under the tails if necessary to even out the thickness), nestling the fillets into the mushrooms and spooning some of the mushrooms on top.

Bring the mixture to a gentle simmer over medium heat, cover the pan, reduce to medium low, and simmer until just cooked through (use the tip of a paring knife to check), 7 to 12 minutes, depending on thickness.

With a slotted spatula, transfer the fish to serving plates or a platter. Over low heat, whisk the remaining 1 Tbs. butter into the sauce. Spoon the sauce over the fish and serve sprinkled with the remaining 1/2 Tbs. parsley.

**Variation:** This recipe works well with many types of fish. Mahi mahi, pollock, haddock, sole, flounder, sea bass, and halibut make perfect substitutes; just reduce cooking time for thinner fillets.



## Cumin-Rubbed Tuna with Roasted-Jalapeño Tartar Sauce

Serves four.

**3 medium jalapeño chiles**

**1/4 cup mayonnaise**

**1/4 cup thinly sliced scallions, both white and green parts (from about 4 scallions)**

**1/4 cup chopped fresh cilantro**

**2 Tbs. fresh lime juice**

**4 Tbs. vegetable oil**

**Kosher salt**

**1 Tbs. ground cumin**

**1 tsp. freshly ground black pepper**

**4 tuna steaks, about**

**1 1/2 inches thick**

**(6 to 8 oz. each)**

Set the jalapeños over a gas burner on medium-high heat or on a baking sheet under a broiler. Roast, turning occasionally until the skin chars all over, 6 to 7 minutes. Put the chiles in a paper bag or a bowl (cover with plastic) and let them steam.

Meanwhile, in a small bowl, whisk the mayonnaise, scallions, cilantro, lime juice and 2 Tbs. of the vegetable oil.

With a table knife, scrape the charred skin off the jalapeños. Discard the stems, cores, and seeds and chop the jalapeños finely. Stir about half of the jalapeños into the sauce, season to

taste with salt, and add more jalapeños to taste—you may not want to use them all. Chill until ready to serve.

In a small bowl, combine the cumin, 1 1/2 tsp. salt, and the pepper. Rub the mixture onto both sides of the tuna steaks. Heat the remaining 2 Tbs. vegetable oil in a 12-inch heavy-duty nonstick skillet over medium-high heat. Add the tuna steaks and sear until browned on the first side, about 2 minutes. Flip and cook until browned on the second side, about 2 minutes more (the tuna will still be raw in the middle). Let the tuna rest for 2 minutes and with a very sharp knife, slice it crosswise into 1/4-inch-thick slices. Serve with the jalapeño sauce.

**Note:** The flavor and texture of fresh tuna are best when it's served raw or very rare in the middle. If you prefer to eat fully cooked fish, try this recipe with swordfish or halibut steak and cook the fish through.

## Broiled Miso-Marinated Halibut

Serves four.

**1/4 cup white miso paste**

**1/4 cup sake or dry white wine**

**1/4 cup mirin**

**2 tsp. soy sauce**

**1/4 tsp. Asian sesame oil**

**Four 6-oz. skinless halibut fillets**

In a large bowl, whisk the miso, sake, mirin, soy sauce, and sesame oil until combined. Add the halibut, turn to coat with the marinade, cover, and refrigerate for 30 minutes.

Position a rack 4 inches from the broiler element and heat the broiler to high. Line a heavy-duty rimmed baking sheet with foil and set a flat metal rack in (or over) the pan. Remove the fish from the marinade and arrange

it on the rack, skinned side up. With a brush, generously dab and drizzle some of the marinade over the fish. Broil the fish until it's brown in spots, 3 to 4 minutes. Gently flip it with a spatula and dab most or all of the remaining marinade on the second side. Broil until the fish is browned in spots, flaky, moist, and just cooked through (use the tip of a paring knife to check), 3 to 5 minutes more.

### Serving suggestion:

Serve with a colorful vegetable stir-fry.

**Variation:** If you can't find halibut, try substituting swordfish or mahi mahi.



## Herb & Parmigiano-Crusted Tilapia with Quick Tomato Sauce

Serves four.

- 2 large cloves garlic, minced (about 1 Tbs.)**  
**6 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil**  
**14.5-oz. can diced tomatoes**  
**Pinch granulated sugar**  
**Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper**  
**3/4 cup fresh breadcrumbs**  
**3/4 cup finely grated Parmigiano-Reggiano**  
**1/2 cup chopped mixed fresh herbs, such as thyme, parsley, chives, or oregano**  
**Four 6-oz. skinless tilapia fillets**  
**1 large egg**

In a small (1- to 2-quart), heavy saucepan, cook the garlic in 2 Tbs. of the oil over medium heat until it begins to color, 1 to 2 minutes. Add the tomatoes and their juices, sugar, and a pinch each of salt and pepper. Simmer for 15 minutes, stirring occasionally and breaking up the tomatoes with a wooden spoon. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

Meanwhile, on a large plate, toss the breadcrumbs, Parmigiano, herbs, 1/4 tsp. salt, and 1/4 tsp. pepper.

Season the fish with salt and pepper. Beat the egg in a wide, shallow dish. Dip each fillet in the egg and then the breadcrumb mixture, pressing it on to help it adhere.

In a 12-inch heavy-duty nonstick skillet, heat the remaining 4 Tbs. olive oil over medium-high heat. Add two of the fillets and cook until the coating is nicely browned and the flesh is opaque and cooked through, 2 to 3 minutes on each side. Use a slotted spatula to move the fish. Repeat with the remaining fillets. Serve the tilapia with a spoonful of the sauce.

**Serving suggestion:**  
Broccoli rabe makes a nice accompaniment.



## Salmon Seared on Bacon with Balsamic Vinegar, Honey & Rosemary

Serves four.

- 1/4 cup balsamic vinegar**  
**1 Tbs. honey**  
**1/2 tsp. finely chopped fresh rosemary**  
**2 slices bacon**  
**Four 6-oz. skin-on, scaled, center-cut salmon fillets**  
**Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper**

In a liquid measuring cup, combine the vinegar, honey, rosemary, and 2 Tbs. water.

Cut the bacon slices in half crosswise. Lay a slice on the flesh side of each piece of salmon and arrange the salmon, bacon side down, in a 12-inch heavy-duty nonstick skillet. Sprinkle the salmon skin with salt and pepper.

Set the skillet over medium-high heat and cook until the bacon is golden and crisp, 4 to 5 minutes from when it begins to sizzle. Turn the salmon and continue to cook until the skin is crisp and the salmon is just cooked through, 4 to 5 minutes more.

Take the skillet off the heat and transfer the salmon to a platter. Pour off the fat and return the skillet to medium-high heat. Stir the vinegar mixture well and add it to the skillet. Simmer until slightly thickened, 1 to 2 minutes. Pour over the salmon and serve.

**Serving suggestion:**  
Serve with herbed polenta.

**Note:** For this dish, you want the skin on the salmon to crisp up like the bacon on the other side. The fish should be scaled—if it's not, ask your seafood seller to do it for you.



## Mussels Steamed with Leeks, Tomatoes & Garlic

Serves four.

- 2 medium leeks**
- 3 large cloves garlic, coarsely chopped**
- 1 bay leaf**
- 1/3 cup extra-virgin olive oil**
- 14.5-oz. can petite-diced tomatoes**
- 2 tsp. chopped fresh tarragon**
- 1/4 tsp. crushed red pepper flakes**
- 4 lb. mussels, scrubbed well (see the note below)**
- 1 loaf crusty artisan-style bread, sliced**

Trim the dark-green leaves and root ends from the leeks. Split the leeks lengthwise and rinse them well under cold running water. Slice them crosswise into about 1/2-inch-thick half-moons.

In a large, heavy pot, cook the leeks, garlic, and bay leaf in the oil over medium heat, stirring often, until the leeks begin to brown, about 10 minutes. Stir in the tomatoes and their juices, tarragon, and pepper flakes and simmer to meld the flavors for 5 minutes. (This mixture can be prepared

up to 3 hours ahead and left out at room temperature.)

When you're ready to cook the mussels, return the leek mixture to a boil over high heat. Add the mussels, cover, and cook, stirring occasionally, until the mussels open, 3 to 8 minutes. Spoon the mussels, broth, and vegetables into large bowls and serve with the bread for dipping in the broth.

**Note:** Clean mussels just before cooking by scrubbing them well under cold water. Don't soak mussels. Pull off and discard any fibrous "beards" attached to any of the mussels. While scrubbing, try sliding the shells apart. If the mussel is dead or full of mud it will slide open and should be discarded. Also discard mussels with gaping shells that don't close as they warm up or when squeezed or poked.

## Seared Scallops with Golden Shallot & Grapefruit Sauce

Serves four.

- 1/2 cup finely diced shallots (2 to 3 large)**
- 8 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil**
- 1/2 cup fresh pink or Ruby Red grapefruit juice**
- 1/4 cup white-wine vinegar**
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper**
- 1 3/4 lb. medium all-natural "dry" sea scallops (see the tip below)**
- 1 Tbs. thinly sliced chives (optional)**

In a 10-inch skillet, cook the shallots in 6 Tbs. of the oil over medium-high heat, stirring constantly until the shallots are golden, 4 to 5 minutes. Remove the skillet from the heat and stir in the grapefruit juice and vinegar. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Set aside.

Pull off and discard any muscle tabs still attached to the sides of the scallops. Pat the scallops dry with paper towels and season them lightly with salt and pepper.

In a 12-inch heavy-duty nonstick skillet, heat the remaining 2 Tbs. oil over medium-high heat. Add the scallops (in batches if necessary to keep from crowding them), cover with a splatter

screen if you have one, and cook until they are golden brown on both sides and almost firm to the touch, 2 to 4 minutes per side.

Add the shallot sauce to the scallops and cook briefly, shaking the pan, until the sauce is just heated through. Serve immediately, sprinkled with the chives, if using.

### Serving suggestion:

A side dish that soaks up the sauce is perfect for this dish—try rice pilaf studded with toasted nuts.

**Tip:** Purchase scallops that are "dry," or unprocessed. Processed scallops are soaked in a solution that makes them retain water, which is released when they're seared, making it harder to brown the scallops. Frozen processed scallops will have sodium tripolyphosphate listed in the ingredients; all-natural dry scallops will have no additional ingredients.